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DUKE

OF

LAUZUN.

VOL. II.

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THE

DUKE OF LAUZUN;

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE;

Interspersed with numerous Anecdotes of the Court of Louis XIV. and forming a Companion to the Duchess of La Valliere.

BY MADAME DE GENLIS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

Ambition is at distance
A goodly prospect, tempting to the view:
The height delights us, and the mountain-top
Looks beautiful, because 'tis nigh to heaven;
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,
What storms will gather, and what tempests shake us!

Otway.

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THE DUKE

OF

LAUZUN.

CHAPTER I.

NO, misfortune never delights to seek its victims among men born in poverty and indigence; these beings, besotted and weighed down by misery, never contemplate the past, the present, or the future; insensibility renders them inaccessible to sorrow and chagrin; stupidly indifferent to every event in life, they know neither its pleasures nor its pains; their happiness and enjoyments consist merely in sensual gratifications, and the indulgence

of appetite; sobriety and industry secure them from maladies and physical evils, and when these assail them, they are not augmented by the power of the imagination. What influence then can misfortune exert over such men? Its efforts would be impotent to crush and overwhelm them, its wounds would only be slight and transient; contemning besides such wretched objects, it selects more noble victims; it is in palaces and near thrones that it fixes its abode, where the indulgence of a morbid sensibility prepares every heart for its reception; where factitious passions and superfluous wants impart to it every moment the fatal influence of producing the most profound despair on account of the most frivolous objects; where it inspires terror and dismay in the most exalted personages, who shudder and become appalled at its approach. In vain

do they wish to preserve themselves from its baleful power, it respects no one; it accompanies them whithersoever they go, and it is always among the highest ranks that it exercises its most cruel ravages. We have beheld it even lay its merciless hands on the sacred representative of Deity, and carry mourning and desolation throughout the universe.

M. de Lauzun, while in the sunshine of prosperity, was far from suspecting that the history of his life would one day serve as an example to posterity of the fickleness and rigour of fortune; that his splendid success, glory, and prosperity, would only contribute to render his misfortunes more afflicting and dreadful. Surrounded by the dazzling favours of fortune, his wit, his accomplishments, and courage, seemed to justify its striking partiality; and in

the highest pitch of his elevation, he never appeared unworthy of his destiny.

The King, notwithstanding some secret infidelities, was always attached to the Duchess of La Valliere. His predilection for other females arose merely from a love of novelty, but it was not less ardent and lively on that account. He had for a long time admired the beauty and attractions of the Princess de Monaco. Emboldened by M. de Lauzun's imprudent confidence, he conceived hopes of success, and ventured to declare his sentiments. Desire often usurps the place of love, and its language is frequently so impassioned, that we are readily deceived. On hearing of the King's declaration of his passion, Madame de Monaco was transported with delight. Dazzled by the glory which the Prince had acquired, she beheld him with rapture almost indescribable, She only opposed

such a degree of resistance to the King's passion, as appeared to her necessary to enhance her favours.

The most refined artifices are, however, insufficient to elude the penetration of real love. It discovers the most hidden intrigues, because it foresees them, and the effects of jealousy in a character naturally haughty and passionate, are equally dangerous as dreadful. When M. de Lauzun first began to entertain suspicions, he burst into violent reproaches. But love soon found means to assuage these first expressions of discontent and resentment. Madame de Monaco melted into tears, and protested her innocence. M. de Lauzun, moved by her tears, and deluded by her shew of sorrow, suddenly felt all his fears vanish. This scene ended in an accommodation equally tender and sincere on one side, as it was false and perfidious

on the other. But sentiments played off with the greatest art cannot long deceive. A single moment often suffices to unveil their duplicity and falsehood. Alternate disputes and explanations soon succeeded to the interviews formerly so charming and so delightful, the remembrance of which tended still farther to augment the regret of M. de Lauzun.

In this situation he resolved to obtain an indubitable proof of the infidelity of Madame de Monaco; her connection appeared to him sufficiently manifest; but how convince himself of it? Occupied with this idea, while walking towards the evening upon the borders of the grand canal at Versailles, he perceived at a distance a man glide through the groves; mechanically he followed him with his eyes, and soon thought he recognized the King. Anxious to ascertain the truth of

this conjecture, he rapidly passed into another walk, and arrived in sufficient time to see the person whom he pursued enter the grove of Metamorphoses. M. de Lauzun concealed himself behind a horn-beam hedge, where he could observe every thing without danger of discovery. No sooner had he taken his station, than the King, whom by this time he perfectly knew, turned about, opened the gate from the grove, placed the key on the outside, and after again shutting it, disappeared under the foliage.

M. de Lauzun no longer doubted that this nocturnal and mysterious excursion indicated a rendezvous; his agitation was extreme, and while he dreaded he yet wished for the fatal moment when his perplexity would be removed. While thus distracted by such contrary feelings it occurred to him to shut up the King in the

grove, at the risk of every thing which might befal him. With this intention he advanced towards the gate, and after double-locking it, took out the key, and threw it into a basin of water, situated at a little distance. He then returned immediately to the spot where he at first concealed himself; shortly afterwards two persons cautiously approached; one of whom, notwithstanding the darkness, he discovered to be Bontemps, the King's valet de chambre, by whose side he distinguished a female wrapped up in a long gauze robe. M. de Lauzun was several times on the point of darting out toward her, in order to tear away the veil which concealed her visage; but the reflection that he had taken away the key, tranquillized his feelings, and induced him to wait patiently for the moment when the obstacles which had been interposed to her en-

trance into the grove, would enable him to discover her. Astonished at not finding the key, Bontemps very naturally supposed that his Majesty had not yet arrived; but the Lady's vanity was wounded, and a few words escaped her which sufficiently shewed her surprise and dissatisfaction. M. de Lauzun shuddered on hearing a voice which he could not mistake; all his doubts were cleared up; his respiration became difficult, and deep sighs nearly suffocated him. Was it love, anger, hatred, or indignation, which agitated him? No, none of those sentiments were distinct, but all were combined in one alone. It was the desire of avenging himself, and of punishing a woman who was capable of such consummate perfidy. While Madame de Monaco trembled, lest she should be discovered, Bontemps struck several times loud enough to be heard by the King,

who arrived a moment afterwards. On the valet de chambre intreating him to open the door quickly, his Majesty replied, that he had put the key on the outside; while Bontemps was looking for it on the ground, the King attempted to push back the bolt, but he found the door double-locked! What an embarrassing situation for all three! In vain did the King and Bontemps endeavour to force the lock, it resisted their combined efforts. After a moment's conversation, through the door, it became necessary to retire, in order to afford means to Bontemps of liberating his master.

In the mean while M. de Lazun had rushed from the fatal-spot; he abandoned himself with a kind of pleasure to the most violent fury and despair; he ran and ranged up and down the immense park; he sought the most obscure places,

and the most impervious to light, the remains of which harassed his feelings, and augmented the dreadful agitation which filled his mind. When night at last veiled all objects from his sight, fatigued and distracted he fell upon a seat of green turf. Recovering by degrees from the delirium of his mind, he became calm, and blushed at his own weakness. One of the happiest effects of a great elevation of sentiment is, that it preserves us from loving the object which we are compelled to despise. "What!" exclaimed M. de Lauzun, "shall I still have the infamous imbecility to love her? Would it not be the height of meanness, after the proofs I have had of her perfidy? No, hatred and disdain must succeed to an attachment so unworthily outraged." This resolution, dictated by pride and reason, appeared in his mind alone worthy of him; and as contempt is

not a sentiment produced by illusion, but is the result of judgment, his reflections, during the night, served but to confirm him in the resolution of breaking finally with Madame de Monaco.

But in this case it will be necessary to trace a new plan of life and happiness; but how fill up the frightful void left in the heart when deceived in its first attachment, when these ties are not dissolved by satiety, but violently burst asunder by the object which in our delightful illusions we conceived would have loved us until death? But how supply a sentiment which has so long constituted the delight of our existence? All the other pleasures of life are so infinitely inferior!— What are they to him who has lost the pleasure of being beloved? Frivolous dissipation, even elegant pleasures, are soon followed by lassitude and disgust,

when we recollect the object with whom they were partaken. How shall we discover, how desire any thing to replace a connection so dear to the heart? What substitute can be found for an unconquerable passion which so delightfully occupied every moment of our existence?

Such were the thoughts that occupied the mind of M. de Lauzun, when an unexpected event fixed his ideas, and determined, so to speak, the destiny of his future life.

The folding doors of his apartment were thrown open, and a messenger from the King announced; who entering immediately after, delivered a letter to M. de Lauzun from the monarch. That Prince informed him, that the Duke of Mazarin, who had for some time retired to his own domains, wished to resign his office of Grand Master of the artillery; and he added, that though the youth of M. de

Lauzun might appear an obstacle to his promotion to this high trust, yet that in his estimation, it only rendered him more worthy of obtaining it, and that as his friend and his monarch, he was happy to seize this opportunity of bestowing on him, without solicitation, a splendid recompense for all the services he had rendered to the state and to himself. The remainder of the letter expressed the most affectionate sentiments, and contained an order to attend him alone in his cabinet, after the breaking up of the council.

Never before had the King written to any one in such a tender and friendly manner. M. de Lauzun deeply affected, replied like a courtier who had been loaded with such a splendid mark of royal favour, but at the same time with that noble confidence which shewed that he believed himself justly rewarded.

Of all the expedients which M. de

Lauzun could employ to fill up the void that love had left in his soul, that of delivering himself up without reserve to a just and laudable ambition, was assuredly the most conformable to his character; thus we behold him endeavouring not only to emulate, but to surpass the most celebrated examples of his own, and former times. The highest dignities, and the most important employment, that could be acquired by honourable means, did not appear to him above his deserts. Nevertheless, all his actions partook of the wit and humour for which he was so highly distinguished; the grossest flattery in his mouth, assumed the character of dignified praise from the delicate turns of his expression, and the quickness of his feelings, which seemed to shew that the sentiment he uttered rather proceeded from the impulse of the moment, than from premeditation and reflection. His desire of pleasing those whose

approbation he wished to acquire, manifested itself in a manner so much the more flattering, as it appeared to result from politeness alone. Every thing beyond this, far from having the air of a studied eulogium, seemed merely to have escaped in the frankness of his disposition, and the kindness of his heart. His superiority consissed in simplicity and native humour; but a single blemish may render abortive the most powerful and efficacious means of over-ruling man and fortune; a passion as violent as dangerous, will often, in an instant, overthrow the greatest designs, the best combined projects. Such was the case with M. de Lauzun, as will be seen in the events which succeeded to the loss of that agreeable illusion, which had hitherto diffused a charm over every movement of his existence.

It will be recollected, that M. de Lauzun was ordered to attend the King at the

breaking up of the council; at this interview, his Majesty confirmed to him the appointment he had announced in his letter, at the same time assuring the favourite, that his nomination should be rendered public in a few days, exacting from him, however, a solemn promise not to divulge it till that period.

M. de Lauzun affected by so much kindness, promised to acquiesce in his Majesty's wishes, in a tone of sensibility which better expressed his gratitude than could have been done by the most studied speeches; and he retired after this conversation, penetrated with the joy which the favour of his sovereign, and the hope of such an important office, were so well calculated to inspire.

What a revolution in the space of a few hours in the state of his mind and heart! Is it probable, is it even possible? What! no longer to feel the smallest trace of those

violent passions which the evening before had made him execrate his own existence, and every thing around him. Was M. de Lauzun destitute of principles, character, or affections? No; but he yielded to the influence of a passion, that reigns with absolute power over all others; every feeling was annihilated, effaced, and destroyed, except that thirst for power, riches, and titles, which reign paramount in the heeats of courtiers, and which increase in proportion as they endeavour to gratify them.

M. de Lauzun reflected with delight on the effect that his nomination would produce on the Marquis of Louvois, his personal enemy. This arrogant minister whose formidable authority kept all the other secretaries of state in subjection, and who by his boldness and address had partly seized on the reins of government, trembled with rage on beholding M. de Lauzun braved his enmity. It is certain

that he took a pleasure in publicly treating with haughtiness one, whom the proudest of the courtiers spoke of in secret with the greatest caution. His want of respect for a man accustomed to behold all others bend before him, seemed rather to proceed from a desire of struggling against his power, than from a wish to insult him; and their mutual hatred was at this period only displayed in their anxiety to find occasion, of gratifying it.

The monarch was not ignorant of this hatred, and if he enjoined M. de Lauzun to silence, it was from a wish to avoid the remonstrances he was aware he had to expect from M. de Louvois on this occasion.

Louis set a just value on the great talents of this minister, and was inclined to prevent the disgust he would experience in the exercise of his prerogative, by a premeditated opposition to all the arguments

he might urge in favour of this appointment.

The hatred of M. de Lauzun against the minister, was too violent to suffer him to perceive the motive of the King, and the voluntary promise he had received from his Majesty left him not the smallest doubt of his ultimate promotion.

Satisfied in this respect, his whole thoughts were bent on the conduct he should assume in regard to Madame de Monaco. Too much injured, and especially too proud, to have recourse to a shameful dissimulation, it was not his intention that she should remain ignorant he had witnessed her interview with the King; but refining on vengeance, he determined not to reproach her with perfidy, but on the contrary, by assuming a tone of irony, and the most chilling contempt, to punish this guilty female.

With the same ardour, and with equal

eagerness, as he would the evening before have enjoyed the pleasure of beholding her, did M. de Lauzun now, firm in purposes of vengeance, repair to Saint Cloud.

This was one of those evenings, in which Madame only received a select party of her particular friends, and on such occasions the time was wholly dedicated to the pleasures of conversation.

This Princess was, indeed the first who introduced conversation parties at the French court. Before her time, their amusement chiefly consisting in attending ro the representation of small dramatic pieces.

In the circle which Madame attracted around her, much genuine wit was displayed, without the least degree of arrogance; the most frivolous things were related with grace and interest; in a word, freedom, politeness, and pleasantry, con-

stituted the principal charms of her society.

Under the pretence of relating an extraordinary dream, M. de Lauzun, with equal wit and malice, entertained the company with a tale, in its principal traits, nearly resembling the adventures of Madame de Monaco with the King. During this recital, he occasionally regarded her, and as she appeared agitated or composed, he drew aside more or less of the veil under which he had concealed his personages.

But as he wished only to humble, and not wholly unmask her, the moment he perceived that the emotion, of which she was no longer mistress, would betray to the company the hidden meaning of his allegory, he suddenly stopped, saying, one of my friends passing by at the moment awoke me, and thus dispelled the illusions, which had occupied my mind during my slumbers. "Were you

not then in bed," inquired the Count de Guiche?"

—"No," replied M. de Lauzun, "I was sleeping on a verdant bank, by the side of the grove of Metamorphoses."

This last speech completely disconcerted M. de Monaco; she clearly saw that he had witnessed her interview with the King, and had doubtless been the author of the loss of the key. No longer hoping to deceive him, she henceforth considered him in the light of an enemy, who held her in his power, and her confusion, which proceeded from a mingled sensation of shame and anger, was the more remarkable, as she was not in general easily disconcerted.

M. de Lauzun, far from being affected by her distress, appeared, on the contrary, to take delight in augmenting it.

In these parties, it was very common to sketch portraits, each giving under a ficti-

tious name that of the person he most loved. When it came to M. de Lauzun's turn, he said in a very lively, but expressive tone, the picture, I am about to draw, will be very short, but it will exhibit a most striking and accurate resemblance. *She is admired as soon as seen, soon this admiration is converted into love, but when intimately known, she inspires only hatred and contempt.* Happily, M. de Lauzun stopped, since Madame de Monaco could no longer hear him, having fainted.

It is not on the first deviation from virtue, that females lose a sense of shame, mingled with sorrow, when their conduct becomes publicly known, but only when time and the influence of habit render them indifferent to public opinion. M. de Lauzun retired very much gratified with this commencement of his vengeance, and the grief which he beheld

Madame de Monaco suffer, obliterated, in some measure from his mind, the scene in the grove, of which he had held her up as the victim.

CHAP. II.

THE day, so impatiently desired, in which the King had promised to declare, after the breaking up of the council, the appointment of M. de Lauzun as Grand Master of the Artillery, at length arrived.

The hall of council was only separated from that where his Majesty received the whole court by a private cabinet, into which few persons were admitted. Nyest, principal valet-de-chambre, in this quarter of the palace, was consequently very much astonished to see M. de Lauzun enter it, and enquired the reason with an air of great curiosity. M. de Lauzun, who supposed this man to be much attached to his interest, confided to him the

business, on which he came, not imagining it any breach of his promise of secrecy to anticipate a few moments the public declaration of his appointment.

Nyest appeared to be much flattered by this mark of confidence, and congratulated M. de Lauzun with much seeming sincerity, but drawing out his watch immediately after, he pretended that he had still time to execute an urgent commission, and departed, saying, he would return directly.

Nyest was the creature of de Louvois. This minister, who did not assist at the council of Finance, was engaged in an apartment above the cabinet, in which M. de Lauzun waited for the King. Nyest darted like lightning up a private stair-case, presented himself before M. de Louvois, told his news, and returning with equal rapidity, resumed his station near M. de Lauzun, who entertained not the slightest suspicion, that

his fatal indiscretion would deprive him of the brilliant prospect which he had cherished with deceitful joy.

M. de Louvois had already arrived, he held under his arm some paper, to serve as an introduction, and requested admittance. Nyest affected surprise, saying, that the council was not yet risen. "That is of no concequence," replied the minister, "I must speak with the King on an affair of consequence," and immediately enteted.

The King, astonished, rose, and approaching him, inquired what had happened. "Sire," replied M. de Louvois, "your Majesty is about to declare M. de Lauzun Grand Master of the Artillery. Your Majesty is certainly subject to no controul in the disposal of your favours, nevertheless, I thought it my duty to represent to you the estrangement that subsists between M. de Lauzun and myself; his haughtiness and caprice is well known;

he will incline to change every thing, and to introduce innovations into every department of the artillery. This post is so intimately connected with the war department, that the service must unquestionably suffer from his whims and enterprises. One of the least inconveniences connected with the declared misunderstanding between the Grand Master of the Artillery, and the minister at war, will be the daily appeals it will be necessary to make to your Majesty, respecting our reciprocal pretensions, of which you must every instant become the judge."

The King, excessively piqued that his secret was known by the man, from whom he was most anxious to conceal it, replied in a very serious tone: "Be easy, M. de Louvois, I will see, the thing is not yet fully determined on."

A few moments after the council arose, and on leaving the hall, his Majesty pas-

sed M. de Lauzun, without speaking, or even regarding him.

Astonished at this conduct, M. de Lauzun remained until the evening in a state of the most painful anxiety; being then fully convinced that his Majesty did not incline to recollect his promise, he took the resolution of recalling it to his mind. The Prince replied to him with a constrained air, that he must have patience, as it could not be done in an instant. M. de Lauzun experienced a melancholy surprise; it was the first time that Louis had ever spoken to him in such a dry and frigid tone. He returned with his heart full of uneasiness and anxiety. Tormented by the most mournful presentiments, he experienced not a moment's repose. That countenance, on which he had hitherto beheld only an expression of condescension, and a smile of kindness!—a tone of benevolence and of friendship!—how sud-

denly all was changed towards him. He experienced a state of inconceivable agitation.

Nothing has a greater tendency to render individuals unjust, than chagrin and discontent. Without knowing the King's motives, M. de Lauzun harboured a keen and deep resentment. After a few days spent in vain and cruel hopes, the tumultuous voice of ambition overpowered his reason; he watched for a private interview, spoke to the King, and audaciously required him to keep his promise. Louis, piqued at his manner, coolly replied:—"*I gave it you only on condition of the most profound secrecy; failing in this particular, you have freed me from my promise.*" M. de Lauzun, who only saw in this answer the desire of justifying an action so unworthy the dignity of a sovereign, wholly forgot himself; he retired some paces, turned his back to the King,

drew his sword, struck the blade with his foot, crying with fury: "I can no longer serve a Prince who has forfeited his word."

The King, though transported with rage, performed on this occasion perhaps the greatest action of his life; he immediately advanced towards the window, opened it, and throwing out the stick which he held in his hand, said with calmness; "*I should be sorry to strike a man of quality*," after which, he precipitately retired without casting a look on the unhappy Duke, who remained as if thunder-struck.

On returning to himself, grief and remorse gave him strength to fly; he rushed impetuously from the chateau, and shut himself up in his own house, penetrated with the most lively despair. The disorder of his mind was too violent to leave him one distinct idea; he might yet perhaps have believed himself happy, had he been able to persuade himself and the

whole world, that his reason was really alienated. When the arrival of an officer of the guards was however announced to him, charged with an order from the King to arrest and convey him to the Bastile, he felt as if relieved from an insupportable weight; he found in this punishment, however severe, a motive of consolation; an unbounded clemency would have caused him to die of shame and repentance. He submitted without humiliation to this rigorous order. On the way to the place of his confinement, chance led him past the house of one of his most intimate friends, the sight of whom, though it affected him, did not shake his courage. After bidding him adieu, in a calm and firm tone of voice, he intreated him to mention to the King, that he would joyfully submit to the most severe punishment, and that he begged his Majesty to believe, that after being deprived of his

favour, he could neither regret the loss of his place nor his liberty.

Nevertheless, when the gates of the Bastile were closed upon him, and he beheld himself in that obscure prison, he felt ready to sink under the weight of his misfortune: a thick cloud obscured his sight, a terrible oppression of the heart nearly deprived him of consciousness, and he sunk into a chair, exclaiming: "How many sorrows may we not suffer without being deprived of life!" This moment of weakness was, however, of short duration; soon recovering part of his firmness, he added: "Let me not waste my moments in useless regret, but rather let me endeavour to support my courage: besides, what have I to regret? Betrayed by love, deserted by friendship, what should I do in the world?" Yes, it was the King's friendship, that this unfortunate and guilty man dared to invoke.

If the excess of his grief procured him some repose, he suffered dearly for it on awaking. Precipitated from the enchanting abode of pleasure, to the depths of a gloomy and frightful dungeon! What a change! The evening before, powerful, and envied, the favourite of the greatest monarch in the universe, and now in a place where he could only behold the present with terror, and contemplate the future with affright! In similar misfortunes, the remembrance of the past, far from assuaging our torments, becomes our greatest punishment. As the days glided on, M. de Lauzun felt his sorrow aggravated by the inaction and profound silence that reigned around him. We are deeply affected by first misfortunes; it is only habit which reconciles us to suffering. What then will become of him, who by a violent and sudden shock is hurled from the highest elevation, into the most profound abyss. Will he call

to his aid the consolations of hope? He was young, presumptuous, and we cannot doubt the empire which his character would exercise over him in those days, when his enemies believed him already destroyed. At other moments, he beheld his situation in its true point of view; an eternal banishment was the only amelioration of his condition, which he hoped to obtain. It was in one of those moments, when after having been for more than two hours plunged in the most sad and melancholy reflections, he suddenly heard the noise of several persons approaching, and in a moment beheld the friend, to whom he had spoken in his way to the Bastile, enter his chamber.

The Marquis was loved and esteemed by the King, and no person was more worthy of being thus distinguished. He was naturally and without any effort, sincere, generous, and possessed of a feeling heart.

With all the wit and politenesss of a courtier he was a stranger to their vices; hatred, jealousy, and all the weaknesses of vanity were to him unknown. Susceptible of the most sincere and lively friendship, the misfortune of M. de Lauzun had deeply affected him, firmly resolved not to abandon him in his disgrace, and to brave, uninfluenced by ostentation or pride, the danger to which such a conduct exposed him. The intimate knowledge he had of the King's character powerfully encouraged him to undertake this noble enterprise. He represented to his majesty his former favourite delivered up to the most profound affliction, and suffering under the pangs of a remorse, the violence of which nothing could moderate. With infinite art and delicacy, he boasted of his attachment, and depicted it with the persuasive eloquence of friendship, which moves, leads away, and convinces, and of

which the gentleness excludes not the vehemence.

The King listened and approved this courageous defence of the unfortunate, and secretly applauded all the praises bestowed on his former favourite. He assured M. de Geustry in a feeling tone, that he was delighted to behold him possessed of the courage, to speak in favour of his friend; that his courageous conduct, far from displeasing him, still farther increased the esteem he had always felt for his character.

With such dispositions the King, in a short time, felt all his former friendship revive for M. de Lauzun, which he had so well deserved by his services and attachment, and of which an irresistible burst of passion, highly culpable as it was, had never wholly deprived him. Already his pardon was sealed in the heart of the monarch, and he was only deterred from

granting it by the dread of the consequences to be apprehended from too great lenity on this occasion.

But while Louis listened only to his own clemency, and generously determined to blot out of his mind so atrocious an offence against an individual, Madame de Monaco meditated very contrary designs. For a long time she had been ardently attached to M. de Lauzun; but now she detested him; she dreaded him as an obstacle to her design of supplanting Madame de Valliere. We have already seen that Madame de Monaco had only yielded to the King through an impulse of vanity. It was a public triumph over him, that she was ambitious of obtaining; it was without participation that she wished to reign over the heart of Louis. Stimulated by these motives, her first solicitude was to ruin her former lover.

As the King had always much dreaded

lest M. de Lauzun might discover his intimacy with her, she conceived that the time was now arrived of informing him of every thing she had suffered from the transports of his jealousy, from the violence of his reproaches, and from the terror which constantly occupied her mind, of beholding his fury bursting forth before the whole court. We need not stop to inquire whether by this confidence she did not indirectly acknowledge the rights which she had given to M. de Lauzun to exercise over her his vengeance. Perhaps she knew, or thought it extremely probable, that the King had been already informed of it. It is certain at least, that she flattered herself that his Majesty, in order to rid himself of so dangerous a rival, would banish him for ever from his presence.

Though exquisite sensibility may sometimes degenerate into imbecility in men, it must always be regarded as an indispen-

sible requisite in females; since it is to it that they owe those amiable virtues which do so much honour to their sex. Madame de Monaco's conduct on the present occasion evinced that she was wholly destitute of it. As a return for the most ardent love, she unconcernedly laboured to ruin him to whom she had been attached. Not satisfied with being unfaithful, she was also barbarous! Her beauty had seduced the King; but the indignation with which her conduct had inspired him on this occasion, operated in future to preserve him from falling into a new weakness, and an enormity, as base as despicable, finally cured him. He frequently reproached himself for this intrigue, considering it as an act of perfidy toward his mistress, and as a deed of treason against his friend, who appeared so much less culpable, since he had discovered that it was

not unknown to him. He represented to himself what the infidelity of Madame de Monaco had made him undergo, and sympathizing with him in his sufferings, he persuaded himself, that he owed to him not only pardon, but some kind of reparation for injuries, with which he reproached himself so much more keenly, as the individual who caused them no longer, in his estimation, possessed any charms. Happy at having it in his power to exert the usual generosity of his character, he hastened to give orders that the Marquis of Geustry should be informed that he wished to speak to him immediately. As soon as the Marquis arrived, the King informed him that he pardoned M. de Lauzun; he was moreover charged to announce to him that, in compensation for the place of the Grand Master of the artillery, which had been given to the Count de Lude, he

intended to confer on him that of Captain of his Guards.

The facility of performing great and magnanimous actions is unquestionably one of the most delightful prerogatives of supreme power. He whose actions are uncontrolled, he who never meets with opposition ought naturally to be generous, beneficent, and just; but while acknowledging the happiness of Princes born to be the dispensers of public felicity, let us take care not to diminish by this reflection the sentiment of gratitude which we owe to them; it is attached to the benefit, and ought never to be separated from it.

The Marquis, transported with a change so unforeseen, scarcely took time to thank the King for sending him on a commission which he so ardently longed to execute. He flew to the Bastile, into that dismal abode where the days, the hours, and the minutes are reckoned with such woful im-

patience, and to which he was about to carry joy and happiness.

M. de Lauzun read at once on his friend's countenance the happy tidings that he had to communicate, but on learning the details, his strength was unequal to support the joyful transports with which he was overpowered, and his looks alone expressed what he felt. The Marquis did not allow him time for reflection, but hurried him away, and led him to the feet of the King, who raised him up, embraced him, and repeated to him at different times, that every thing was pardoned and forgotten! "Ah, Sire," exclaimed M. de Lauzun, "you overwhelm me with so much goodness that I shall expire with shame and repentance! How shall I become reconciled to myself when I retrace my crime? How shall I ever recover happiness, when I have been so cul-

pable? "Since I have forgotten every thing," said his Majesty, "you must no longer think on the subject."—"I wish," replied M. de Lauzun with vivacity, "to remember it during my life in order to consecrate it wholly to repair my errors, and to love your Majesty." This interesting scene was willingly prolonged by the King and his favourite, who were mutually happy on seeing each other, and never weary of expressing their sentiments.

M. de Lauzun had passed, as if by enchantment, from the Bastile to a post of the highest trust, to a place which was to him invaluable, because the duty attached to it led him constantly to attend on the person of the King. This idea so transported him with joy as to obliterate almost wholly from his mind all recollection of his former sufferings.

As soon as he assumed his new office, he attracted the attention of the whole

Court by the manner in which he acquitted himself. Attentive without any affectation to the discharge of his duty, he displayed that easy and dignified behaviour, which never fails to charm, particularly when it is accompanied by the graces of youth. The King was delighted with him; M. de Lauzun observed it, and this was the only recompense he wished to obtain.

Though the infidelity of Madame de Monaco had tended somewhat to prepossess M. de Lauzun against the delightful, but deceitful passion of love, he yet quickly again yielded to its power. It is true that he then seemed to have adopted other principles, while willing to enjoy the happiness attached to love, he believed it possible to separate from it those chagrins and torments which the the too feeling mind frequently experiences from its influence. Several young and beautiful women engaged his attention

only for an instant; being deceived in the first object of his attachment, he became inconstant, not through fickleness, or want of sensibility, but through reason itself, which determined his preference; it was to beauty alone that he wished to render homage. Familiarity, however, soon destroys its charms when not accompanied by other qualities, but as beautiful women are not more destitute of them than others in always making them our choice, it is impossible not quickly to meet with one who will overturn our system of freedom. M. de Lauzun was about to experience the truth of this observation, and of very nearly again becoming the victim of the deceitful promises of love.

CHAP. III.

FOR a long time he admired the figure and accomplishments of the Marchioness of Montespan, with whom no one could contend the palm of wit and beauty. M. de Lauzun knew her only slightly; but he accidentally met with her one morning, when alone in the chamber of the Queen, over whose household she was the superintendant. After having informed her Majesty that he came to speak to her on the part of the King, he entered into conversation with Madame de Montespan,

and although it was of very short duration, both of them recollected it with pleasure.

A few days afterwards, the King gave a *fête*; Madame de Montespan, who was passionately fond of dancing, finding herself much fatigued at the commencement of the ball, and in want of rest, seated herself near to M. de Lauzun, who seldom danced. Very soon, they entered into an animated conversation with each other: Madame de Montespan possessed a lively and brilliant imagination; all her expressions, though original, were appropriate and well chosen. Under an appearance of levity, she frequently made sagacious and profound reflections, but always with inimitable grace and delicacy; a singular mixture of exquisite sensibility, and a taste for sportive raillery, concurred to render her extremely interesting. M. de Lauzun listened to her with inexpressible rapture; never had any person appeared to

him so fascinating, and he felt himself suddenly seized with the desire of rendering himself agreeable to her. He even told her this, with a freedom which he would not have dared to assume, if the lively tone which she had given to the conversation had not emboldened him smilingly to utter things, which, at the time he reflected on very seriously. It may be supposed that both had felt this disposition at the same moment, for the conversation, though at first confined to frivolous topics, gradually took a more serious turn. They were astonished at their own feelings, they fancied themselves conversing together, and beholding each other for the first time; but the surprise in this case was nothing more than mere admiration, and we know that when the imagination becomes fascinated, the heart seldom remains long unaffected.

Though adorned with all the simple

graces of youth, and an air of great ingenuousness, Madame de Montespan possessed all the cunning and penetration which is the result of much experience; married to an odd and ridiculous man, and deprived of all those comforts which can alone render the married state suportable, she believed she had a right to complain, more particularly as she was fully persuaded that love could alone confer happiness. A mind fraught with so dangerous an error, readily delivers itself up to the charm of being beloved; thus Madame de Montespan far from endeavouring to combat her growing attachment, abandoned herself to it without constraint. M. de Lauzun had too much experience not to discover the true state of her mind, and the hope of a return served to encrease his love.

The *fêtes* which succeeded to the birth

of the Duke of Anjou*, gave occasion to frequent meetings between these lovers. In the midst of these assemblies so propitious to such kind of conversations, he made an avowal of his sentiments. At this declaration Madame de Montespan appeared more agitated than offended; every part of her conduct declared her concealed emotions; her looks, her deep blushes, her vague and unconnected words . . . . M. de Lauzun became again timid; he trembled for a moment, at having been so presumptuous, and he entreated with the greatest ardour to obtain a reply. Madame, however, remained obstinately silent, but it was that kind of silence which did not seem very formidable to M. de Lauzun, and which he was at no loss to comprehend. To this silence, therefore, he opposed all the demonstrations of the

* Second son of Louis XIV. who died at the age of three years.

most violent sorrow, well knowing that females, in general, are secretly flattered, by having it in their power to exercise severity, and that the least sagacious among them delight to drive their lovers to despair, before rendering them happy, in order to convince them, and perhaps even persuade themselves, that they have only yielded to the most irresistible seduction. To present to the female mind motives calculated to excuse their dereliction from virtue, is the most certain means to succeed in our designs. It is by loading them with the most exaggerated praises, which tend to render them presumptuous and secure, that man obtains a dominion over them, and becomes master of their feelings and sentiments. Thus M. de Lauzun carefully concealed his rising hopes, and appeared even terrified at the emotion and embarrassment of M. de Montespan, as if he had believed them to

be certain indications of disdain and anger.

This wily conduct was attended with all the success he could desire, and while M. de Lauzun only aimed at the flattering triumph of such a brilliant conquest, Madame de Montespan beheld in his conduct the effect of the unbounded attachment and respect with which she had inspired him.

The emotions of a beginning love soon diffused over her soul an inconceivable charm, which penetrated to the bottom of her heart. Intemperate in all her feelings, instead of endeavouring to regulate them, she took passion for her guide, and in such a situation, the mind never yields by halves . . . Thus then M. de Lauzun once more trod the path of love, strewed with flowers and thorns!

How indeed could he escape from such a bewitching assemblage of graces and charms? But what chiefly tended to his subjugation was, that he was passionately

beloved; and in fact, if the vivacity of language, joined to the most tender demonstrations, afford certain indications of true passion, he was certainly warranted in cherishing this illusion.

During several months his attachment suffered not the least abatement. The opportunities of beholding her occurred so seldom! It was necessary to employ so much address, in order to obtain a few moments undisturbed conversation with her. If difficulties and obstacles re-animate sentiments nearly extinct, what effect must they not produce, when nothing has tended to weaken their violence?

After having endeavoured, for a long time, to devise some mode of seeing Madame de Montespan more frequently, and with less danger, M. de Lauzun thought of introducing her to Mademoiselle de la Valliere.

Obliged every evening to accompany the King to the house of the Duchess, nothing

in this case could prevent him from beholding her every day. This motive must certainly have acted powerfully on two persons so much attached to each other as Madame de Montespan and M. de Lauzun; but some difficulties attended its execution which they knew not how to surmount.

The only favour Madame de Montespan enjoyed at court, she owed to the patronage of the Queen, and in order more certainly to secure the good-will of her Majesty, she had openly declared herself against the favourite, supporting her declamations on the grand principles of virtue and honour. She had even been heard several times to say aloud before the Queen: "*God preserve me from becoming the mistress of the King; but were I even so unfortunate, I should never have the effrontery to appear before the Queen.*"

To connect herself with Madame de la

Valliere, she must therefore suddenly belie all the principles she had formerly displayed with so much noise and ostentation; and even at court, it is necessary, in subjects of importance, to maintain some degree of consistency between our words and actions.

Madame de Montespan would besides expose herself to the resentment of the Queen, and she had farther to dread that her advances would even be rejected by the Duchess herself, who could not be ignorant of the contempt with which she had always spoken of her conduct, and which, notwithstanding the gentleness of her character, would scarcely take any steps which might lead to any intimacy with a female, who had condemned her with so little reserve.

The possibility of experiencing such an humiliating refusal, surmounted even her love, and Madame de Montespan urged

so many delicate and prudent reasons against this project, that M. de Lauzun found it difficult to combat them. In the end, however, he offered one reason against her objections, to which she had nothing to oppose. "I cannot see," said he to her, "that it can ever be too late to perform a just and generous action. The public recantation of an error will always do you honour; it is especially necessary, with the view of dissipating the odious suspicion of jealousy and envy, against a person in power.

"The talents, modesty, benevolence, and a thousand other virtues, must render Madame de la Valliere an object of admiration; obstinately to persevere in refusing them to her, would be unworthy of one, who, possessing herself these same advantages, ought the better to be able to appreciate them in another.

"As to the manner in which the Duchess

will receive your advances, I will become her guarantee; I have some influence over her mind. In different circumstances I have given her advice, which she has reason to applaud, and the manner in which I shall mention you to her will, I am confident, inspire her with an ardent desire of knowing you better."

"I am fully satisfied in this respect," replied Madame de Montespan, "but will the King approve of this connection? Have you never perceived, that if he partly conceals his dislike against me, I owe this forbearance only to his politeness?"

"He will speedily relinquish these prejudices," replied M. de Lauzun, "when he beholds you more frequently. When we undesignedly please from the power of a thousand different perfections, how escape from their influence when admiring them more nearly? Why besides not rather suppose that the King wishes to

preserve himself from falling a victim to your charms?"

M. de Lauzun pronounced these words in a tone of gallantry, without affixing to them any other meaning, and he continued to prove to Madame de Montespan with much earnestness, and in his usual persuasive manner, that she could not do better than adopt the plan which he had formed, of connecting herself with the Duchess.

Madame de Montespan had for some moments sunk into a profound reverie, and on recovering herself, assured M. de Lauzun, that she would be entirely guided by his advice in this affair; that he ought to direct her; that since she loved him, his wishes were to her laws, and that in future, love alone ought to preside over her destiny.

From this moment, M. de Lauzun zealously endeavoured to introduce Madame

de Montespan into the select society of the King.

Madame de Valliere had a mind fraught with sentiment, and no person could better express the gentle and affectionate emotions of the heart, and in a tone of voice more affecting; but a species of melancholy, not uncommon to feeling minds, rendered her silent and reserved in a large company; frequently she forced herself to appear gay and sportive, lest the King should experience weariness in her society; but this part was fatiguing and painful to a female who was a stranger to every kind of affectation, and incapable of the slightest artifice.

M. de Lauzun, in order to succeed in his views, chiefly praised to the Duchess the graces and perfections of Madame de Montespan's mind; her simplicity, address, and lively sallies, and in short the

uncommon charms of her conversation; he likewise took care to add, that the dread of her sarcasms prevented many females from attempting to make an impression on the heart of the King.

With such well timed eloquence he easily succeeded in causing Madame de la Valliere and her friends to second his project, who not content with daily displaying before the eyes of the Monarch the most beautiful woman of the court, even took the superfluous trouble of pointing out to him her numerous perfections, joined to a mind the most amiable and the most original.

The King very soon became distractedly enamoured of this young beauty, but from a feeling of delicacy towards her whom he had loved with so sincere an affection, he concealed this new passion from all eyes but hers who had inspired it. This de-

claration appeared to offend and afflict Madame de Montespan; the delight of a first passion had smothered in her soul ambition and pride.

Louis, accustomed to make easy conquests, was enflamed by this resistance; his love became more ardent and required greater delicacy; and he soon displayed such an ardent desire to render himself agreeable to her, that his conduct began to astonish Madame de Montespan, and render her extremely uneasy. She still loved M. de Lauzun, but led astray by vanity, she formed the design of ruling the King by the ascendency of her mind alone*. Seriously intent on this project, she confided to M. de Lauzun the secret of the King's passion, and the bold plan of subject-

*Madame de Caylus relates in her Recollections, that Madame de Montespan was flattered at being mistress not only of her own dispositions, but of the passion of the King.

ing him, without giving her lover the small-est cause to upbraid her with weakness.

She submitted however this arrogant project to the will of M. de Lauzun, but with the most tender protestations of a love and fidelity which nothing could ever shake.

This presumptuous cunning is much more readily comprehended than the credulity of M. de Lauzun. Was it the blind confidence of love? or must we believe that the soul of a courtier is capable of sacrificing every thing to the gratification of his ambitious designs? However this may be, he, who knew so well the human heart, and still better that of Princes, who never long tolerate any opposition to their inclinations, blindly adopted the chimerical project of Madame de Montespan, and even applauded himself for having introduced to Madame de Valliere a friend so

amiable as to dispute with her the heart of the King, and so prudent as to employ as much attention to render him faithful to her, as another would have taken to deprive her wholly of it; for he knew that a prospect of success was necessary to support the enthusiasm of this sentiment, and that the most ardent love would be quickly annihilated, if wholly deprived of hope.

Penetrated with gratitude for a sacrifice, which he justly considered as the greatest ever made by love, he beheld without fear the kind of coquetry which Madame de Montespan intended to employ to acquire influence, and obtain ascendency; but the art of seduction and resistance, if it be not the most culpable of artifices, is certainly very little calculated to succeed; for it is an error to suppose that females can give vain hopes with impunity. Men in general detest nothing so much as to be

considered as dupes, and in the eyes of Princes, this is an inexpiable crime; they consider nothing as a greater offence; self-love, more fastidious than love, is also more easily wounded. Madame de Montespan soon saw herself reduced to the sad alternative of either sacrificing her lover, or exposing herself to the resentment of the King, and to those numberless chagrins which such a misfortune would bring in its train. Struggling between these contending passions, the agitation of her mind affected her temper; even her beauty began to suffer, and a sickly paleness succeeded to the former dazzling brilliancy of her complexion, while instead of her former animation, she became sad and sorrowful. M. de Lauzun would doubtless have easily discovered what passed in her mind, if at this period a thousand different circumstances had not interrupted his own tranquillity.

His affairs had been for a long time in a very deranged state, but since his entrance in the Life Guards his debts had become enormous. Naturally prone to magnificence, he wished that his corps should be distinguished from all others by the beauty of the horses, and the elegant appearance of the officers. The desire of gratifying him in this respect, induced many of them to launch into expences far beyond their means. Too noble-minded to render them the victims of their complaisance to him, he took care that considerable presents should be made to them from time to time, and such was his extreme delicacy on these occasions, that they were always bestowed in the name of the King. The price of his commission as Colonel of a regiment of dragoons, which he had sold to the Count of Rannes, was entirely devoted to this purpose, in place

of being employed to liquidate his former debts.

The Count de Guiche and the Marquis of Geustry, his most intimate friends, were alone acquainted with his private difficulties, and they never ceased importuning him to endeavour by an advantageous alliance to free himself from so embarrassing a situation. Mademoiselles de Crequi, de Retz, and Colbert, were then considered as the greatest beauties of the Court, and it was beyond a doubt that M. de Lauzun would have been accepted by any of the three he had chosen to address. He still however hesitated a long time; but as his situation daily became more critical, and his creditors more clamorous, he took the resolution of partially communicating the affair to Madame de Montespan, fully resolved to do nothing that might give her uneasiness, and to be regulated by her

advice alone. At that time he held her character in such a high degree of estimation, that even independent of the illusions of love, she still appeared to him the most accomplished female he had ever known.

In the delicate situation in which Madame de Montespan stood with the King, not being able any longer to dissemble from her own mind that she began in spite of herself to grow sensible to the ardent perseverance of so amiable a Prince, and the object of all his secret and declared wishes, she could not prevent herself from feeling an emotion of joy in thus being enabled to devote herself to her new passion without incurring any risk of embroiling herself with her former lover, and in whom she flattered herself with still finding a true and faithful friend. She employed therefore much address in per-

suading him that she immolated to his happiness, a sentiment which consulted only his own satisfaction, and exacted from him a positive promise to execute a project which could alone restore his tranquillity. This conduct, apparently so generous, had all the success imaginable. M. de Lauzun was completely duped by her, and his attachment, and his affection for Madame de Montespan knew no bounds, but it was only himself who made the sacrifice; for seriously occupied in fixing his choice in procuring for himself an establishment, rendered absolutely indispensible by the situation of his affairs, there could no longer be any other tie between them than that of friendship, and it was impossible that this triumph of reason over the heart should not be accompanied with much sorrow and regret. Often did the recollection of his past hap-

piness inspire him with contrary resolutions. Often was he tempted to throw himself at her feet, and implore at them the restoration of rights too slightly abjured, and of his former happiness. Irresolute, agitated, and acting incessantly in opposition to his own inclination, it became necessary every day to obtain a new victory over himself. These internal commotions produced a sensible change in his disposition, and about this time the occurrence of an unfortunate event tended still more completely to depress his spirits; his relation and friend the Count de Guiche was disgraced, and quickly compelled to exile himself far from his family, his friends, and his country.

It cannot be forgotten how far he had presumed to carry his wishes; and for a long time M. de Lauzun had entertained very uneasy presentiments respecting the

consequences of an attachment too impassioned to be prudent, but he never suspected that they would be so soon verified. We shall here give, in a few words, the recital of an event so unfortunate.

CHAP. IV.

THE King saw with pain his brother's house a prey to the most unhappy dissensions and jealousies, which were attributed to the Chevalier de Lorraine. The fact is, that these had their origin in an act of weakness and indiscretion on the part of the Viscount Turenne. Enamoured of the Marchioness of Coatquen, he revealed to her a state secret, which had been concealed from Monsieur the King's brother.*

* The league of Louis XIV. with Charles II. for the destruction of Holland; in negociating which, Madame had been herself employed, and which she successfully terminated.

This lady, who was attached to M. de Lorraine, told it to her lover, by whose means Monsieur became informed of it. The Prince immediately hurried to the apartments of Madame; he loaded her with threats and reproaches, and their union, which had never been cordial, was from that day a constant scene of uproar and quarrels. Madame mildly reproached Madame de Coatquen for the misfortunes of which she had been the cause, and as her only punishment, informed her how far she had contributed to render her unfortunate. This lady kneeling by her bedside, while bedewing the hands of the Princess with her tears, only replied to her in these verses of Venceslas:

I went..... I was..... Love o'er me has such sway,
I lose myself..... and know not what I say.

The Chevalier de Lorraine, instead of appeasing Monsieur, endeavoured only to

irritate him still farther, by creating disorder and confusion in her Court, and involving in trouble all those particularly devoted to Madame. The King, who had been long acquainted with the Chevalier's intriguing disposition, often lamented the facility of his brother, in allowing himself to be governed by a man of his character. As soon as he was informed of the liberty which this audacious favourite had taken, he saw the necessity of punishing him for a conduct so extremely culpable, by banishing him to Pierre-Encise. At first he issued orders for M. de Lauzun to arrest him; but on the representation which the latter made to him, that it was usually the officer on guard, who was employed in the execution of such commissions, the King, who always carefully avoided infringing established customs, sent for the Duke d'Ayen, requiring however from M. de Lauzun, in whom he placed

the greatest confidence, that he would be present at the arrest. On this intelligence, Monsieur fainted; he then burst into tears, and falling at the feet of the King implored his clemency, and that he would revoke that fatal order which destroyed all his happiness. The King, while he raised up his brother and endeavoured to console him, remained inflexible on this head, and Monsieur returned home in a kind of fury, uttering the most bitter reproaches against the King and Madame. He moreover accused the latter of having promoted the misfortune of his favourite, and caused her to be shut up in his chateau of Villers-Cotterets. After a few days, however, he appeared to become appeased, returned to Saint-Cloud, and lived with the King, and even with his wife, as if he had forgotten this humiliation, but at the bottom he had sworn to retaliate, and he was not slow in fulfilling his oath.

To wound more certainly the heart of Madame, he thought it necessary to direct his first efforts against the Count de Guiche, and to this purpose nothing appeared so well calculated as to cause him to be exiled, under a pretext, whether true or false, that the Count had at a masked ball assumed the disguise of a female, with a view to converse with Madame, without danger, and with greater freedom.

The Prince, with his face bathed in tears, went to demand justice from the King, exaggerating in long details the Count's crimes, and his wife's imprudencies. The King, moved by his brother's tears, at first endeavoured to soothe him, by pointing out the necessity of concealing such wicked attempts, and that if compelled to punish them, it could not fail to excite a great noise. But Monsieur, who had his designs, brought such serious

charges against the Count de Guiche, that the King, surprised and irritated, told him in the first emotion of his passion, that having guards at his own house, it was astonishing that he had not given immediate orders to arrest the insolent being, who had dared to forget the respect which was due to him. He concluded by assuring him, that he would never suffer such conduct to remain unpunished, but at the same time advised him to consult the delicacy of Madame, who, virtuous and full of spirit, had however not attended to the consequences of some steps, which, though innocent in reality, were condemnable only in appearance; in short, he omitted nothing which he believed could in the least tend to mollify his brother's resentment against the beautiful and interesting Henrietta, whom he tenderly loved, and for whom he had for some time past again felt all the affection which his intimacy

for Madame de la Valliere had only for an instant suspended. To put an end to this disagreeable affair, with the least noise possible, the King ordered the Mareschal de Grammont into his presence, and after having informed him of the injuries of his brother, he pointed out to him, that considering the nature of his crime, a simple exile would be reckoned insufficient, and that he ought perhaps therefore to give him up to the resentment of the Prince whom he had offended. He afterwards determined that in order to deceive the public respecting the real motives of his departure, M. de Guiche should retire for two years from court under the pretence of travelling.

The unhappy Count received the orders for his arrest, with the sorrow and despair of a man who is suddenly torn from the object of his affections. Many were the bitter tears which he shed on this

occasion. It was not the dazzling pleasures of Versailles which he lamented, but the Princess, whom he had been compelled to abandon to the rage of her cruel and implacable enemies. He would have wished to offer up to her his heart and his life, before being torn from her; but as resistance was impossible, he endeavoured to assume a tranquil air, and however painful this effort might be, he perceived it was indispensible, in order to disappoint the malignity of those who kept their eyes fixed upon him, and who would have considered the most simple marks of his sorrow as a criminal passion; he had therefore the energy to stifle his sighs, and except a few complaints poured into the bosom of M. de Lauzun, he supported his fate with a firmness so admirable, as to astonish and confound his enemies. The two friends agreed to keep up a regular correspondence with each other.

M. de Lauzun did not endeavour by officious consolations, which only tend to irritate the mind labouring under affliction, to soften the sorrows of the Count; in such a situation, the voice even of reason itself must pass through the organ of the heart, in order to be understood.

Shortly after the Count's departure, M. de Lauzun was compelled to go and pass fifteen days at Gisors, where a brigade of his company was quartered; after teminating an affair relative to the service, he hastened to return to Versailles, in which during his absence many events had occurred.

Madame de la Valliere was too ardently attached to the King to remain long ignorant of his new passion. An apparent felicity still veiled her real sufferings; she occupied the place of favourite, but Madame de Montespan possessed without participation the heart of the monarch; she

essayed, with her usual sweetness, to triumph over this too formidable rival. If she had not loved Louis for his own sake, she would doubtless have found sufficient energy to struggle some time against designs purely ambitious; but having always contemned pomp and grandeur, she beheld her only solace torn from her, and not being able to support the idea of witnessing the King's inconstancy, she left the Court, and shut herself up in a convent at Chaillot. By her departure, the public were informed of the secret of Madame de Montespan, who no longer hoping to be able to deceive it by a false show of virtue, experienced at last in its full plenitude, the pleasure of possessing the Monarch's favour with as much pomp and splendour, as the Duchess had displayed of modesty and moderation. Louis however had not wholly lost the recollection of his love for Madame de la Valliere;

how forget her whose love was confined to him alone? The King therefore naturally displayed much grief, on account of her absence. For the first twenty-four hours after her departure, Louis wished to recall her, and convinced that no one had greater influence over her than M. de Lauzun, he cast his eyes on him to execute this delicate commission. Having just arrived, he had not yet spoken to any one, and it was from the Duchess herself, that he first learned all the details of the misfortunes which she had suffered, from the connection of the King with Madame de Montespan. While listening to her, M. de Lauzun felt not any personal resentment against his former mistress, and without justifying, he discovered motives to excuse her; it is true, that he could not avow them to the Duchess, but he was conscious that her conduct originated from his own advice, and that his connec-

tion had been formed almost in opposition to the wishes of Madame de Montespan; that she had afterwards offered to sacrifice to him such a flattering and enviable distinction; that it depended wholly on himself, to have prevented her love for the King, and to have guarded a heart, which was only transferred to another, when he had voluntarily renounced all his rights over it. In this indulgent disposition of mind, he was anxious to serve Madame de Montespan, by bringing back the Duchess, whose misfortunes excited general interest, and would throw odium upon her who, under the veil of friendship, had betrayed her without shame, and without remorse. Operated on by these motives he exerted all his address to calm the resentment, and moderate the sorrow of Madame de la Valliere, and he succeeded in persuading her not to abandon the King, who, notwithstanding some transient errors, regarded

her always as the only woman whom he had ever truly loved. Her delicate mind, flattered by the idea of such a preference, found in it consolation. She returned to court to endure much chagrin and mortification; it is well known, that after several years patient sufferings, her conversion became as celebrated as had been her crime.

Madame de Montespan beheld M. de Lauzun without the least embarrassment; her resolution was taken, her designs were irrevocably fixed; she gave herself up to a boundless ambition, and believed that she only yielded to her destiny; equally haughty as a Queen, as vain as a courtezan, she detested her superiors, despised her equals, and trampled on her inferiors. The same homage and respect were paid to her, excepting what etiquette rigorously prescribed, as due only to the Queen. En-

vironed by such flattering distinctions, whether through policy, or the remembrance of a sentiment formerly so tender, she uniformly treated M. de Lauzun with distinguished favour, and in a private conversation with him she pointed out to him in the most ingenious manner, that it was conducive to their mutual advantage not to separate their interests, their projects, and their expectations. While thus pointing out to him all the advantages that would result from their union, she lavished on him the strongest expressions of an attachment, the want of which nothing can supply when it is tender and sincere; and she knew so well how to impart to the language of friendship such a fascination, that M. de Lauzun found in it all the attractions of novelty. Hurried away and subdued, he delivered himself up with delight to the delightful overflowings

of an unbounded confidence. A friend, twenty years of age, beautiful as an angel, enjoying unbounded power, universally extolled and admired, who has from the first avowed her attachment, can inspire every illusion at pleasure, and supply, at least for some time, the place of every other passion. Thus M. de Lauzun, whom we not long since beheld alternately fickle, enamoured, inconstant, and impassioned, seemed no longer to exist but for the pleasures of true friendship, and for the happiness of every day rendering himself more worthy of that of his Sovereign. At this period, his favour with the Prince was so great, that no one believed it could be augmented. Those who, through envy, do not allow that the great possess hearts capable of loving—those who dispute with them the happy power of knowing the sweets of reciprocal friendship, only be-

stowed the name of *infatuation* on the affection which Louis bore for his favourite; but a smile, a single look from the Monarch, amply recompensed M. de Lauzun for all the envious speeches, false opinions, and hatred of his rivals.

It is however difficult to contend long against real merit, when founded on superior qualities; they triumph sooner or later over calumny and jealousy: thus all quickly agreed in extolling those which so pre-eminently distinguished M. de Lauzun. His reputation even became so great, that foreigners of the most illustrious birth seemed to vie with each other in seeking his friendship. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, who had espoused the Princess Margaret of Orleans, was of all his adherents the most sincere, and at the same time the most elevated by his rank and birth. This Prince felt the most sincere

attachment to M. de Lauzun. While spending his evening at the Luxembourg with his sister-in-law, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, he took a pleasure of the spirit, the taste, the friendship, and the magnificence of M. de Lauzun, the most simple actions of whom always afforded to him a new subject of admiration.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, without openly joining in these praises, had, however, the address to lead by a thousand different ways the conversations to this subject. She listened to them with avidity, and found an indescribable charm in hearing the merit and accomplishments of a man for whom she had conceived an attachment which occupied her whole mind;—an attachment which she dared not yet avow to herself. This situation was so much the more critical, as she knew not all its danger, or wished to dissemble

it. This proud and haughty Princess, so full of confidence in the powers of her own mind, never deviated from, during the course of a youth, surrounded by pomp and splendour, was very far from believing, that at thirty-six years of age, when the wanderings of the heart have no excuse, and obtain no indulgence, she could be exposed to experience all the torments and pleasures of love.

Anna-Maria-Louisa of Orleans was the daughter of Gaston of France, son of the immortal Henry IV. and brother of Louis XIII. While yet in her cradle, she lost her mother Maria of Bourbon, Duchess of Montpensier, who left her the richest heiress in Europe. At the age of twenty, she found herself sole mistress of a fortune, which amounted to twenty-four millions. She loved to display pomp and splendour; the extreme magnificence of

her house often eclipsed even that of the young King, who, a fugitive during the continuance of the civil wars, was sometimes in want of the very necessaries of life. The history of this unfortunate period has transmitted to us the alliance of this Princess with the chiefs of the Fronde, and the active part which she took in that war, wherein she displayed on various occasions an intrepidity, a presence of mind, and talents, which would have done honour to the greatest captains of the age. It was on returning from an enterprize, as perilous as important to the faction,* that two ladies who had assisted in her exploits, and participated in all her dangers, were enrolled as *Maréchales-de-Camp* at the head of the army.†

* The taking of Orleans, which she subjugated to the party of the Princes.

† Mesdames Fiesque and Fontenac.

But the day, when the engagement at the Fauxbourg Saint-Antoine occurred, was that in which her energy, courage, and elevation of mind, appeared in their fullest lustre. It is beyond a doubt that the Great Conde would have succumbed in the midst of his glory without the active zeal and co-operation of Mademoiselle de Montpensier. It was she, who with the most persuasive eloquence brought over his father, the Marechal de l'Hopital, the City-Guard, and the people. Her tears, her sorrow, moved all hearts in favour of the Prince, and subjected all to her pleasure. All these efforts would have served no other purpose, however, than to retard the ruin of this great man, if she had not risen superior to her sex, by an action equally characterised by its boldness and singularity. She flew to the Bastile, commanded and forced the Governor to discharge the

cannon on the King's troops, and thus in one instant, saved a hero and his army.

If such conduct deservedly entitled her to the eternal gratitude of the Prince, it at the same time excited against her the lively resentment of the court. Thus on the day following that on which the King made his entry into Paris, after the complete extinction of the civil war, Mademoiselle de Montpensier was exiled to Saint-Fargeau. She received the order with a dignified submission, but at the same time with calmness and serenity. Incapable of bending her pride even to entreaties, she would have preferred a prison, even death itself, to the shame of imploring the clemency of Cardinal Mazarin, that all-powerful minister whom she detested, and whom she continued to treat with the most sovereign contempt.

In order fully to perceive the empire which her character assumed over her on

the present occasion, it must be observed, that this event happened at a period when her youth and her beauty were in their full lustre, and that she was threatened with a tedious exile. She employed herself in introducing order into the administration of her extensive domains; the remainder of her time was devoted to reading, and those exercises to which she was passionately attached. No person sat on horseback with greater grace and address; dancing, horse-races, and hunting, agreeably filled up her leisure hours. In the species of seclusion in which she lived, she was unacquainted with those distinctions which vanity often suggests to the most generous minds. She was even unacquainted with that desire of pleasing, which is termed coquetry in females, and which, confined within the limits of decency, renders them amiable and alluring. Her dress was such as custom prescribes to persons of her rank, and

never did she bestow a thought on embellishment or mere ornament.

Though possessed of elevated sentiments, her ardent imagination was directed towards objects so wholly remote from love, that she repelled even the language of that chivalrous gallantry which was then in vogue. Poetry afforded her great delight, unless when it depicted the charms or eccentricities of love. She conceived even a sort of contempt for those who keenly felt the influence of this passion, and she openly censured Mademoiselle d'Alençon, her sister, in having espoused, through inclination, the Duke of Guise, regarding this marriage as disproportionate to her birth. It was thus that even in the most legitimate attachments, she never pardoned error. Possessing severe and even rigid principles, manners equally pure as austere, she boasted of the virtues of her sex, without participating in any of those weak-

nesses which nature and education has bestowed on it.

In what light must we then view him, who knew how to develope love in such an elevated mind! Over what prejudices had he to triumph, in order to induce such a woman to reduce herself to the level of an ordinary woman! I almost despair of being able thoroughly to depict all the accomplishments and agreeable qualities of M. de Lauzun, but the glory of having subdued this stubborn heart, may of itself enable us to comprehend how much he was superior to all the men of his time.

CHAP. V.

DURING five years had Mademoiselle de Montpensier lived at a distance from the court; when the King recalled her she received the intelligence with joy; her mind was too just not to perceive her error; as soon as the passions of hatred and of false glory had ceased to harass her, she acknowledged the enormity of her fault, and had frequently lamented in secret that she had not always been in the interests of the King. On arriving at Paris, she received every testimony of respect due to her rank. All the nobility hastened to

congratulate her on her return, but the reception which the goodness of her Sovereign prepared for her, affected her even to tears. It is well known, that the elevated mind of Louis the Great clearly manifested itself, by his mild and affable treatment of all the Chiefs of the Fronde, after the magnanimous pardon granted to their crime. This sublime clemency procured him general attachment, and extinguished even that rage for revolt and independence, which had found its way into the hearts of the Princes, Nobility, and People, and which had troubled, for more than a century, the repose of the royal family, and that of all France.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, on perceiving the King, wished to throw herself at his feet; but the Prince opposed this mark of contrition. He tenderly embraced her, promised to forget the past, and con-

sidered her in future as a Princess worthy of his blood, and of all his affection.

This reconciliation, so ardently desired, by accomplishing the wishes of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, secured to her a permanent and unalloyed happiness. In fact, what more could be desired by her, who, united to the advantage of royal birth, and of a fortune adequate to her rank, all the glory of a high reputation for intelligence, wit, greatness of mind, and elevation of character? This Princess exhibits a valuable example of the vigilance which is necessary in order to persevere in virtue, even in that which appears to us most easy and natural. The remainder of her life would have glided on in a succession of sweet and tranquil enjoyments, if she had not suffered her repose to be interrupted by the most violent of the passions; and experience teaches us, that

it is more difficult to struggle with those which we for a long time despised.

Love at first appeared to the Princess, under the mask of a sentiment of exclusive preferenee, which she conceived could not be withheld, without injustice, from M. de Lauzun. Quickly, however, she beheld him invested with all the perfections with which passion delights to adorn the beloved object, and she continued to resign herself to that admiration, with the confidence and security which are inspired by a sentiment we believe to be approved by reason. It was thus that she drank deep draughts of the enchanted cup, which intoxicates the imagination, lulls prudence asleep, and of which we perceive not the bitterness, till we have no longer the power to dash it from our lips.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier perceived, but too late, the change that had taken

place in her heart; but a moment must at last arrive in which it is impossible to refuse conviction, even to that which we dread most. A crowd of confused feelings, and vague desires, a painful lassitude, without any apparent cause, a distaste for every thing that formerly gave pleasure, an internal uneasiness which displayed itself in all her actions, until M. de Lauzun appeared; then the deceitful calm which succeeded, but which was very soon destroyed by a violent emotion caused by the mere sound of his voice, or by a simple gesture; from all these signs how was it possible for her to mistake the invincible power of love? No, she saw with affright that this passion had originated before she perceived it; and that it ruled over her with irresistible sway, when she would have wished to combat it. In vain did royal pride come to her assistance, tender-

ness prevailed, and became more exalted by the impotent resistance which pride and reason wished to oppose to it.

As yet without any fixed resolution, without any determined object in view, Mademoiselle de Montpensier directed all her attentions frequently to behold and converse with M. de Lauzun. It was now the middle of winter; the court of the Princess, which was composed of several beautiful young females, whose supreme delight consisted in noisy and tumultuous pleasures, solicited her to give them a ball. She immediately gave the necessary orders for it, and the Duke of Tuscany was requested to introduce his friend.

What a pleasure to receive him in her own palace, and to appear before him with all the advantages of rank and birth! what a difference in the joyous preparations for this *fête*, in comparison with those she had

formerly given for etiquette alone, and which constraint and ennui so often empoisoned by the melancholy privilege of presiding over them. It was no longer to her women that she left the trifling occupation of her dress; from the afternoon till night, she remained shut up in her cabinet with her attendants, to discuss very seriously with them respecting her dress on that day. It was surprising to behold Mademoiselle de Montpensier gravely occupied with all the important details of the toilette, and endeavouring to discover as well as others what kind of dress would set off her figure to the greatest advantage.

The young ladies, delighted at seeing their mistress seriously enter on a subject which till now they had never ventured to speak of in her presence, exerted all their taste in assisting her in her choice, and arrangement of a dress which was to eclipse by its splendour all they had ever before

beheld. The jewel box of the Princess being emptied, recourse was next had to that of her aunt, the Queen of England, who possessed the finest diamonds in Europe; and all possible taste was requisite in order to arrange this enormous quantity of jewels without the robe appearing over-loaded with them.

At last the hour arrived, when she was to receive M. de Lauzun in her own palace; in a place where she was mistress and where she commanded without restraint. Politeness and custom allowed her to avail herself of this opportunity to say to him many flattering things, which she could not otherwise have done; but the mere idea of being so near this happiness produced in her mind an emotion which she knew not how to conceal from the notice of the surrounding company: her situation became truly painful from his appearance being protracted beyond the usual time.

On the ball commencing, she dreaded lest some obstacle had occurred to prevent his attendance altogether, and her agitation augmented every moment as the time passed on.

Oppressed by lively and long protracted sensations, she almost resolved to retire, when the happy object of her anxieties appeared, and produced in her mind a rapid transition from extreme sorrow to excessive joy; but her strength was exhausted and she was ready to faint.

The presence of those we love very quickly however dissipates the uneasiness occasioned by their absence. Mademoiselle de Montpensier experienced the truth of this observation, and soon abandoned herself to the delights of her present situation.

It was the first time that she had been the sole object of the cares and attentions of M. de Lauzun; she beheld in his coun-

tenance those marks of admiration, which women the least prone to vanity are too apt to mistake for love, but which is often altogether unconnected with this passion; but what serves much better to characterize it, is the excessive credulity, and the inconceivable readiness of the most rational females to suffer themselves to be deceived by its appearances.

However this may be, Mademoiselle de Montpensier was not deceived respecting the pleasure which M. de Lauzun took in beholding her. Amidst the assemblage of youth and beauty present on this occasion it attended to the Princess alone. The splendour of her dress, the brilliancy of the lights, the grace and dignity of her mien, the gentleness which the presence of a beloved object imparts to the voice and manners; love in short, which more than every thing else was visible in all her actions,

rendered her more attractive than eveu beauty itself.

M. de Lauzun was too sensible to such perfections, not to feel on the present occasion their full influence, but the intoxication of true passion would alone have excused his temerity in looking up to the Princess. Appalled by the immense distance which separated them from each other, it never entered into his mind to endeavour to render himself the object of her love. How then explain what he felt in the course of this evening? It was not assuredly love, but if a mere mark of attention from a person of her rank inspires a lively gtatitude, a visible preference must excite a species of intoxication, particularly when the heart remains perfectly free; as however he was neither vain, nor arrogant, this idea took only slight possession of his mind. In fact, very little reflection was necessary to evince its fal-

lacy; the mind is little ardent in a conquest, when it can coolly calculate the obstacles and dangers, which stand in its way. Besides, what would have flattered his ambition in this triumph was too improbable to present itself clearly to his imagination.

Such, however, was not the case with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, this evening decided the destiny of her future life, and unalterably fixed her resolution.

As soon as she found herself alone, and capable of reflection, her imagination was appalled on contemplating what she had felt during the course of the evening. She trembled at the influence which her passion had acquired, and on considering it more attentively, she conceived herself to be destitute of the necessary energy to subdue it. At the recollection of the different emotions to which she had yielded, she sighed with shame and sorrow. What,

said she to herself, can nothing deliver me from the agonizing torment of a heart formerly so tranquil and happy? In vain do I endeavour to drive this passion from my mind, it obtrudes itself on me every instant. Yes, every moment recalls him to my mind, and this recollection is equally dangerous as his presence. Into what trouble and disorder has not this attachment plunged me? Had I the power to moderate my transports on his arrival? Was it not evident to all those who surrounded me? Ah! if he himself had perceived it! What opprobrium! what humiliation not to be able to disengage myself from the fatal ascendency of this passion! Yet why suffer, why blush at an attachment which I can render legitimate by openly avowing it?

What! have I the power of constituting our mutual happiness, and do I still hesitate? But no, I hesitate no longer, I

comprehend, or rather I feel that he alone is worthy that I should exalt him above all other men. He is not born to remain in obscurity . . . . Is the gulph then which separates us so immense, that we cannot leap over it? The illustrious name of Caumont, joined to the merit of him who bears it, cannot be but dignified and can never become debased. Yes, on my side will be all the advantages of this alliance. This reflection, which gave her hope, restored happiness to her mind, and her imagination being captivated, she felt herself delivered from an insupportable burden, and a gentle sleep succeeding served to tranquillize the agitation of her mind.

On awaking, one of her women brought her a ring which had been found in one of the saloons. Mademoiselle de Montpensier immediately recollected that she had seen it the preceding evening on the finger of M. de Lauzun. She felt not only the

pleasure which is experienced on seeing and touching a thing which has belonged to a beloved object; but she moreover conceived a design which favoured her views, and she hastened to put it in execution. She gave immediate orders for a ring in all respects similar, with an inperceptible mark in order to distinguish it. Her engraver was immediately sent for, and ordered to cut letters in the inner side of the ring, letters which formed her own cypher and that of M. de Lauzun, around which were these words: "*May their union be eternal.*" This executed, she enveloped the ring in a white scarf, upon which was embroidered an eagle hovering in the air before the sun, with the following device beneath, "*Faithful and daring.*" The packet, thus wrapt up, was immediately sent to the house of M. de Lauzun, by a trusty messenger.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, condemned by her rank to be the first to discover

her passion, believed that she had in this way found an ingenious mode of hinting at a circumstance which it would have been too painful to her feelings to have openly declared.

How is it possible to represent what M. de Lauzun felt on beholding the motto, when examining this ring! In the first emotions of haughtiness and pride, he beheld himself already at the height to which the enthusiasm of love inclined to exhalt him; how was it possible to avoid becoming intoxicated with the triumph of having subjugated a heart so proud, and a virtue so haughty.

This reflection again led him to hesitate; but were not their cyphers united, and accompanied by a device which seemed to order him to aspire to every thing the most elevated! — Gradually he recovered his composure, and was capable of contemplating the good fortune which he was

authorised to hope for, but he perceived still better the precipice which a too rash ambition would prepare for him.

What conduct ought he then to assume? To run and throw himself at the feet of the Princess would have been that of an ordinary man. M. de Lauzun, however, guided by a cautious prudence, was not inclined to hazard this bold step; he determined to persevere in his usual conduct, and attentively to observe that of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, which he could easily penetrate if he preserved his accustomed coolness; he resolved in the end to be finally guided by circumstances, or rather to direct them at his pleasure, with that skill which proceeds from a knowledge of the female heart.

About this period the King resolved to undertake, accompanied by his whole court, a triumphal journey into Flanders, in order to visit the different districts in

in this province. Though in a period of profound peace, Louis was attended by an armed force, and the whole military establishment attached to his person had orders to march.

The command of these troops was given to M. de Lauzun with the title of General of the Army. The King, who had hitherto performed all his journies on horseback, travelled for the first time on the present occasion in a superb chariot. A great number of carriages followed this splendid equipage: in every village through which they passed masquerades, balls, or artificial fire-works were exhibited for the amusement of the court.

The principal ladies of the provinces came to behold the brilliant court of Louis. The King admitted them to his table, and conferred on them presents with the greatest gallantry. M. de Lauzun executed the commission, which the par-

tiality of the monarch had bestowed on him, with the greatest credit to himself, and in a manner so chivalrous and dignified, as charmed the King, delighted Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and threw into despair Villeroi and Louvois, his declared enemies.

In order to assemble his army in the plain of Saint-Quintin, M. de Lauzun departed two days before the court. At the moment the King left Compiégne, Mademoiselle de Montpensier threw her eyes over the country, and perceived at a distance a great number of men on horseback. She could not yet distinguish their persons, but a presentiment imparted by love made her conjecture that it was M. de Lauzun approaching to meet the King. An increasing emotion confirmed this hope, and soon she had the pleasure of seeing her lover present himself before the Monarch.

After having saluted the King and Queen, his eyes met those of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who blushed deeply, and threw down her eyes. He had not seen her since the day on which he received the *ring*, and her charming embarrassment on the present occasion attached to it a new value.

The weather, though extremely fine, became suddenly stormy, and the Princess suffered much anxiety on beholding M. de Lauzun, with his head uncovered, exposed to a violent rain. She observed it in a low voice to the King, M. de Lauzun heard her, and could not suppress a smile.

On the evening of this day, it was late before M. de Lauzun presented himself at the card-party of the Queen. He had been detained in making the necessary arrangements for the march of the troops.

After having spoke some moments with Madame de Montespan, he approached Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who was leaning on the chimney-piece, and conversing with the Marquis of Geustry, who in a short time removed to a distance. This was a favourable opportunity to satisfy his doubts; but after regarding Madame de Montpensier in silence for a moment, and just when he was about to address her, he observed her become pale and ready to sink. He imagined that she dreaded an explanation, and as he himself was far from desiring it at the present moment, he felt for her embarrassment, and with infinite delicacy endeavoured to assure her by assuming the most submissive and respectful tone.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier was, however, too much enamoured, and too artless not to betray her feelings in a thou-

sand different ways; and before the return of the court to Paris, M. de Lauzun was compelled to reflect seriously on those hopes which his reason had long taught him to repel as chimerical and extravagant.

Ambition spoke loudly to his noble and dignified heart, and her voice was heard. It was then that he conceived the audacious project of espousing the grand-daughter of Henry IV. the nearest relation of his royal master, and destined at some future period to ascend the throne;—she, in a word, who had disdained so many Princes, and rejected so many Kings.

Penetrated nevertheless with the difficulties attendant on such an enterprise, and wishing to associate himself with a powerful friend, in order to overcome the embarrassment of the new part he was about to play, he opposed himself without reserve

to the female who possessed his unbounded confidence, and entreated Madame de Montespan to aid him with her credit and advice in the accomplishment of his ambitious hopes.

She listened to this confidence with as much surprise as joy. The boldness of the project terrified her not, but she readily made her lover comprehend that his fate depended on success. "Every thing," said she to him, "is now at stake; you must either ascend to the highest pinnacle of fortune, or be dashed from its giddy height; you must become allied to the blood of Kings, or be punished as a madman, who has abused the friendship of his Sovereign by daring to raise his eyes to the first Princess of the blood. It is then indispensible to act with prudence and discernment; I am of opinion that some degree of artifice ought even to be employed,

in order to avoid the imputation of having seduced the affections of the Princess.

"At present rather avoid Mademoiselle de Monpensier; but let this be done without any appearance of design, or so as to give her the slightest offence, while another is employed to bring you together. I know, continued she, that the feelings of the Princess are ardent and impetuous; this conduct will stimulate her passion, and lead her to take some bold step which will at once display her love and your prudence, and afford the strongest conviction that you resisted her designs. His Majesty will be affected with a moderation, which he can only regard as a sacrifice to himself, and you must obtain his consent from his generosity."

M. de Lauzun found this plan too wise not to follow it. Mademoiselle de Mont-

pensier quickly remarked a change in the conduct and manners of her lover; she was convinced that she had been understood, and that he fled from her! That he carefully avoided an explanation, which she had endeavoured to bring about by the most unequivocal advances! Sometimes she admired this delicate reserve, while at other moments she saw in it only a too certain proof of the most perfect indifference. The lot, however, which an union with her held out to him was so enviable as to be desired for itself alone; was it not then respect to her rank which led him to reject it? How then convince him that the offer of partaking with him this rank, was only in her eyes a feeble demonstration of her love! That it was on the throne of the universe she would wish to place him! In the transports of a generous passion, she reproached herself

with not having spoken to him more plainly, at having been too tardy in making known to him what would have rendered him so happy. She believed that nothing could be more easy than to offer to him her hand and fortune, but all this confidence vanished in his presence, in which she trembled and became silent; this restraint heightened her love, which in a short time became the ruling principle of all her actions.

The friends of M. de Lauzun were treated by her with distinction, and loaded with benefits; his favourite sister, Madame Nogent, was admitted into her most select society, and treated with affectionate tenderness. This lady did not at first suspect the true cause of so much goodness; but in a short time she was convinced of the truth, but without yet suspecting that her designs were serious. A terrible and

frightful catastrophe nearly however overturned them for ever, by forcing Mademoiselle de Montpensier into a marriage approved of by reason, rendered necessary on political grounds, and desired by the King and the whole royal family.

CHAP. VI.

MADAME HENRIETTA of England, young, beautiful, amiable, full of grace and spirit, died suddenly, and her loss plunged the whole court into consternation and sorrow.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, without foreseeing the new vexations which fate had in store for her, was walking with the Queen in the gardens of Versailles, when the Duke of Ayen, running out of breath towards them, exclaimed, " Madame is dead!"——

The King gave orders for his first physician to repair in haste to Saint-Cloud, after which he joined the Queen and Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and confirmed to them the sad and afflicting news. His countenance expressed the disorder and grief of his mind; he proposed to them to make use of his chariot, which was in waiting; the Countess of Soissons followed them, and a few moments brought them to the house of mourning and desolation.

Madame lay stretched on a couch hastily made up in a saloon. The violence of her complaint had prevented them from conveying her to her chamber. She was pale, her hair dishevelled, and her visage already covered with the shades of death. Who was able to recognize in her present situation this beautiful Princess, who appeared only a few hours before

glowing in all the freshness of health, youth, and beauty!

The King approached her in a state bordering on despair. "Ah! you see the state I am in," said Madame to him, in a faint voice; that of Louis was suffocated by his sobs. He implored, in the most earnest manner, the physicians who surrounded her bed, to exert their utmost skill to aid this interesting patient, and the next moment interrogated them with the greatest impetuosity respecting the nature of this strange and sudden malady. One of them, seeing the anxiety of his Majesty, inclined to deceive him, and observed in a hesitating voice, "that such maladies generally lasted only twenty-four hours, and that Madame might probably find herself relieved by that time;" but the dying looks of the princess destroyed this fallacious hope.

Madame displayed in her last moments a courage and resignation worthy of herself. Those who surrounded her were stupified with grief, while she alone remained calm and resigned. She consoled the King and Queen, and requesting Monsieur to approach, entreated him to pardon the uneasiness some parts of her conduct had occasioned him, and in this awful moment solemnly protested her innocence.

They embraced a moment of ease to remove the Princess to bed, and intimated to the King, that they only waited for his absence to administer to her the aids of religion, and that there was not a moment to lose.

The idea of this separation, which Louis regarded as eternal, drew from him a burst of tears. Bending over his sister-in-law, he strained her closely in his arms; *but the*

*Princess escaped from his tender embraces, and death, still more powerful, tore her from his royal hands.**

At six o'clock in the morning, M. de Bossuet entered the palace in order to inform their Majesties, that Madame had expired two hours before. Louis suffered his head to fall on his bosom, and remained stunned with this news, as if they had been wholly unexpected.

It is certain that no one ever appeared comparable to this Princess; those, who succeeded in gaining her approbation, might believe themselves endowed with every perfection. Besides, the excessive tenderness and esteem of such a Prince as Louis XIV. elevate her above all praise.

A terrible idea mingled itself with the sorrow of the King on this occasion; Ma-

* Bossuet's Funeral Oration on Madame Henrietta.

dame had declared to him, that she believed herself to be poisoned.—

The King, for a few days, concealed this horrible surmise in his own breast, which several indications but too certainly confirmed. But one night, being even more tormented than before with the terrible words of the dying Princess, he arose, and ordered M. de Lauzun to be called, who, suffering from his own sorrow, as well as that of the King, had passed as sleepless a night as his royal master. The King confided to him his suspicions, and named the Marquis of Effiat and Count Beuvron, who were both strictly connected with the Chevalier de Lorraine, the mortal enemy of the unfortunate Princess.

M. de Lauzun, after a moment's reflection on the best means of discovering this dark and horrible transaction, proposed to the King, that he should be authorised to

select six of the Life-guards, and proceed with them immediately to arrest Purnon, the pricipal steward of the deceased Madame, a man devoted to Effiat, and probably his accomplice, if the Marquis was really guilty. "I will conduct Purnon, by the private gate, into your Majesty's cabinet," continued M. de Lauzun, "and the terror occasioned by your presence will confound this wretch, and make him avow every thing; your Majesty can then interrogate him yourself, and thus discover the crime and its perpetrators."

The King approved this measure, and before day-break Purnon was conducted into his presence. On his entrance Louis threw upon him a glance, and assuming an air and tone calculated to inspire him with the greatest terror, he thus addressed the trembling Purnon: "Listen to me seriously; if you confess every thing, if you conceal no circumstance I wish to

know, I give you my royal word that you shall receive a pardon, however guilty you may be; but if, on the contrary, you conceal the smallest part of the truth, you shall meet your fate before evening. Answer me truly, was Madame poisoned?"

—"Yes, Sire," said Purnon, falling at his feet.

—"And who planned and executed this crime?" rejoined his Majesty.

—"It was the Chevalier Lorraine; he sent a subtle, and very violent poison to the Marquis Effiat, who in the morning threw it into a cooling beverage, of which Madame partook about an hour afterwards."

The King redoubling his threats and assurances of pardon, then inquired if his brother had been privy to this transaction?

—"No, Sire, none of us durst inform him, he would have destroyed us."

At this reply, the King, feeling himself relieved from an insupportable load, exclaimed: "Ah! this is all I wish to learn, but are you certain of its truth?"

It was impossible to harbour the least doubt, since it was highly improbable that this man, who had accused himself, would have screened Monsieur, whose turpitude would in some measure have lesened his own crime. The King was then perfectly satisfied respecting the horrible suspicions which had given him more pain than he was willing to confess, even to his own mind, and which, if confirmed, would have embittered his days, though seated on the first throne of the universe.

Monsieur, who had been insensible to the merits of this accomplished Princess, confined his grief to the outward ceremonials of sorrow, and was anxiously desirous immediately to obtain the hand of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

As he did not conceal his intentions, they became the topic of conversation in the court circles, and it was generally admitted that it was the only alliance worthy of this Prince.

M. de Lauzun now perhaps repented the too great circumspection of his conduct, but he perceived that this was not the moment to change it, and in a juncture so delicate, he carefully concealed at the bottom of his heart the mortal terrors and anxiety which devoured him. Where, indeed, is the man who can behold, without regret, the loss of a benefit which he had, so to speak, appropriated to himself by hope. But when fortune presents to our view the future surrounded with so much glory, and when after being intoxicated by this alluring prospect, we become suddenly convinced that it was only an illusion, it is then that we are truly miserable, though still possessed of every thing

that had formerly constituted our felicity.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier did not experience similar emotions; she had conferred happiness without receiving any return. Besides, her confidence in the benevolence and justice of the King prevented her from fearing that he would compel her to a marriage, to which she was fully resolved never to consent.

She was cautious, however, not at first to destroy all the hopes of the Prince, since it appeared to afford a favourable opportunity for her discovering the real sentiments of M. de Lauzun; but soon disgusted with this restraint, and persuaded that the had concealed nothing from Madame Nogent, the Princess took her apart one evening into a private cabinet, and said to her, "I must inform you of a secret which has long been concealed in my own breast. I have resolved to marry; I shall write three names on this card,

and you shall afterwards choose for me. Madame Nogent taking the card, read: *Monsieur.—The Duke of Longueville.—The Count Lauzun.*

On beholding this last name, Madame Nogent fell at the feet of the Princess, exclaiming: "I have no other reply to make to your royal highness." Mademoiselle de Montpensier embraced her with the most affectionate tenderness; she believed that she had now sufficiently explained herself to hope for an avowal in her turn.

Madame Nogent, in the transports of her joy, went the same evening to her brother's house, with the view of imparting to him what had passed between her and the Princess. M. de Lauzun who knew her excellent qualities, and the great friendship she possessed for him, was also fully acquainted with her indiscretion, and

consequently extremely uneasy at the confidence with which the Princess had honoured her; he laboured to make her perceive the importance of such a secret, and obtained from her a promise of the most profound silence.

Relieved from all uncertainty, M. de Lauzun no longer hesitated to deliver himself up to his brilliant destiny, and took the resolution of coming to an explanation so ardently desired by both himself and the Princess.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier had an aversion to cards, but she seldom failed to be present at the Queen's parties, where she expected to meet M. de Lauzun, who always accompanied the King. There standing near the chimney, or seated in a window, she conversed with those, who, like herself, did not join in the games; except M. de Lauzun, who always retired immediately after saluting her. This even-

ing, however, he approached her with an eagerness, which he took care not to render too evident. In a short time, those females by whom she was surrounded retired one by one to a distance, on perceiving the pleasure she took in speaking to M. de Lauzun.

It was now in their power to make that declaration to each other which can be so well expressed in broken words, and they were not slow in profiting of this happy occasion; the object of their conversation was suddenly changed; it became confidential, and very soon turned on the only object which mutually occupied their thoughts. Mademoiselle de Montpensier spoke of her project of marriage, which M. de Lauzun applauded, pronouncing with embarrassment the name of Monsieur, and some other sovereign Prince. Without making any reply, she drew out her

tablets, and wrote the following lines from Corneille:

> But what avails the favour that I shew,
> If not on one I can my heart bestow.

She afterwards added with much emotion, "it is a long time since my choice was fixed, but it is not on any of those you have named; I wish you to divine it, and shall discover more delicacy in this conduct, than in forcing me to declare it myself."

—"I am extremely unfortunate in not comprehending your Royal Highness; but I dare to solicit permission to wait on you to-morrow, in order to learn what I am so anxious to know; respect will prevent me from displaying any other sentiment but that of curiosity" . . . . he durst not proceed, and observing some one advancing towards the Princess, he retired with precipitation.

On returning to the Luxembourg, Mademoiselle de Montpensier gave orders that next day M. de Lauzun should be introduced into her cabinet. She waited for this moment, which was to decide the happiness or misery of her future life, in a state of agitation, terror and joy, which it would be difficult to conceive, if we did not know that the enviable power of making the fortune of those whom we love, is not wholly free from the painful doubt of not being beloved; this privilege seems even to be attached, as a consolation to those who have only a hut to share with the object of their affections. This was a trial to which Mademoiselle de Montpensier did not wish to subject her lover. She shut herself up in order to prepare for this interview, and to reflect on what she ought to say to him. Useless precaution!— the inspiration produced by the presence of a

beloved object, is far superior to any thing dictated by reflection.

The moment so anxiously desired at length arrived, and Mademoiselle de Montpensier found herself seated opposite M. de Lauzun; both were equally affected, and remained for some time silent. Observing how much this situation embarrassed the Princess, M. de Lauzun proceeded to say in a tone of hesitation: "Of all the misfortunes I could suffer, the greatest would be that o offending your Royal Highness. If I rightly understood your commands of yesterday, I was ordered to endeavour to discover the secret of your heart . . . . . . What must I believe," added he, in an interrupted and broken vcice? "Be yourself the judge of all my perplexities, and deign to inform me if I am the most happy or the most presumptuous of men. Yes! be you made acquainted with the full extent of my pride,

and punish me for having dared to deliver myself up to the most audacious hope! But believe me, never in my mad vanity did I entertain the thought of aspiring to your hand, destitute as I was of a throne to offer to your acceptance." . . . . . .

"Cease," said Mademoiselle de Montpensier, with quickness; "if your modesty, if your delicacy prevent you from aspiring to it, you are not on that account less worthy of a preference: *the most virtuous, and most amiable man, is in my estimation the greatest.* The time is past for disguising my real sentiments; never will I consent to form an indissoluble connection with another, while my heart can love only you."

M. de Lauzun threw himself at the feet of the Princess, penetrated with the most lively gratitude. "Yes," cried he with transport, "I am worthy of my happiness, because I know how to appreciate it."—— This was to both a delightful mo-

ment.—— In a short time, however, M. de Lauzun replied; "no, I cannot consent that your glory be eclipsed; and obscured it certainly would be, were you to espouse the subject of your royal relation. . . .

—" Do you forget that this relation is my sovereign as well as yours, and that the choice I make is not unworthy of his blood? no, never can you be too nearly connected with me; but happily," added she smiling, "this will be the last discussion; cease to examine on which side lies the advantages of this union! . . . . You may readily suppose that I have thought long and seriously on the step I have taken; and in blaming me, you seem to suppose that I can commit an action unworthy of my rank."

— M. de Lauzun was convinced by the justness of this reasoning, and henceforth confining his delicate scruples to his own breast, he resigned himself wholly to the

guidance of his mistress, and entirely occupied himself in lavishing on her a tenderness which was not feigned, and which a lively gratitude, joined to the graces and accomplishments of Mademoiselle de Montpensier were so well calculated to inspire.

CHAP. VII.

AFTER a short time given to the effusions of love and gratitude, it became necessary to think of smoothing the difficulties which presented themselves to the execution of such a project. It was first essential to obtain the consent of the King, and the Princess was advised to write to him immediately, which being approved by M. de Lauzun, an order was given to exclude all company, when the following letter was written by Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

"Your Majesty will perhaps be surprised at the freedom I am about to take, of requesting you to approve my intention of entering into the marriage state: My fortune is superior to that of any foreign Princess, by the honour which I have of being allied to your Majesty, and of living under your protection; the resolution which I have taken will not remove me to a distance. It is M. de Lauzun, Sire, whom I wish to espouse; his own merit and the attachment which he bears to your person are the principle motives which have contributed to fix my choice.

"I only make this request, Sire, after being convinced, that on this union depends the felicity of my life. M. de Lauzun having the honour to be Captain of your Majesty's Guards renders him not unworthy of me. Any place in your Majesty's household would do credit

to the greatest Prince: It is a happiness to occupy a situation near your person, and I request that M. de Lauzun may be permitted to retain his, &c."

On perusing this letter, M. de Lauzun exclaimed: how far was I then from foreseeing a destiny so happy!

Joy gave to Mademoiselle de Montpensier a sportiveness which rendered her charming; her lover was delighted, she perceived it, and became still more amiable, for she now entertained no doubts nor humiliating fears of not being truly beloved.

"I must quarrel with you, for your dissimulation," said she to him, laughing.

—"How so?" replied M, de Lauzun, assuming a very attentive air.

—"Yes," continued the Princess, "you did not tell me that the young, rich and beautiful ladies of Aumale vied with each other for the possession

of your heart, and that being unable to espouse both, they agreed to draw lots, leaving to the loser the consolation of doubling your fortune by retiring to a convent, and taking the vows. And the Marechal de Crequi wished to bestow on you the hand of his niece, Mademoiselle de Retz, the most wealthy heiress in the kingdom. You see that I am informed of all your secrets."

—"I know not what to say to you", replied M. de Lauzun; "I forget every thing in your presence, and can only occupy myself with my happiness."

Before M. de Lauzun's departure it was agreed that she should give the letter for the King, that very evening, to Bontemps. She also advised M. de Lauzun to make a confidant of some of his friends, who had most influence at court, and especially Madame de Montespan, in order to sup-

port her petition in case of any opposition being made to it by her enemies.

The King read the letter of his cousin with more astonishment than disapprobation; operated on by motives of benevolence, he conceived it to be his duty to exhort the Princess, not to act lightly in such an important affair; but after having represented to her all the consequences likely to result from such an union, he concluded by assuring her that he would impose no restraint on her inclinations, and that on all occasions he would bestow on her testimonies of the most tender affection.

This reply appeared to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and M. de Lauzun, a confirmation of their happiness. In order, however, to avoid all reproach of precipitation, they agreed to allow a few days to elapse, not indeed to reflect on a measure they were already fully determined on, but

in order to evince their submission to the advice of the King. This delay, however, disturbed not their happiness; in such a case, patience is not painful, it is only the art of enjoying hope.

At the termination of a month, Mademoiselle de Montpensier proposed to repair to the Thuilleries, with the view of speaking to the King, and declaring to him her perseverance in the project of espousing M. de Lauzun. At the moment she was about to ascend her chariot, the Marechal de Luxembourg arrived to pay her a visit. After some very lively conversation, the Mareschal said to her while regarding her handsome foot, ornamented with superb diamond buckles: "*In fact, we might say without offence to your Royal Highness, this is such a gallant dame, as to be fit to make the fortune of a cadet of a noble family.*" Laugh not, " replied she, " and be

not astonished if one of these days you should see me elevate one."

—"Far from it," cried the Marechal, "I would be delighted at such an occurrence; as first baron of the French Noblesse, I ardently desire every thing that can do them honour."

It was at one o'clock of the morning, when Mademoiselle de Montpensier requested a few moments conversation with the King, previous to his retiring to rest.

When left alone with his Majesty, she repeated the same prayer contained in her letter, and assured him that reflection had only tended to confirm her in a resolution which was now become unchangeable.

—"You blamed with so much bitterness the marriage of your sister with the Duke of Guise," said the King, "that I am surprised at your project; not that there is any difference between a foreign prince, and one of the Nobles of my

Kingdom, such as M. de Lauzun, who is not only dignified by his birth, but will yet become more so from the advantages you will confer on him; but all that I can say is, that I will take no step which might contribute to his good fortune in wounding your interests, nor injure him by opposing your designs; but I intreat you to act on the present occasion with your accustomed prudence." His extreme benevolence induced him to add; "one more advice only remains for me to give you, which is, to keep your project a profound secret, till the moment of its execution; several persons, doubtless the ministers, will conceive themselves warranted to speak to me on the subject, and M. de Lauzun has enemies."

—"Sire," interrupted Mademoiselle de Montpensier, a little terrified, "if your Majesty is our friend, who can injure us?" "Believe that I have my reasons for speaking

to you thus, and take your measures accordingly." The King arose, embraced her with tenderness, and retired.

If the Princess had reflected on the importance of this advice, she would have hastened to conclude a marriage which the permission of the King, and the sanction of the church, would have rendered sacred from every attack, and any other formalities might have afterwards been fulfilled, without any obstacle. But how could it be supposed that a Prince, who on every occasion made it a point religiously to keep his word, would have violated a promise given to his relation and his favourite? . . . .

On the following day the Princess made a public declaration to her household, of her approaching union with M. de Lauzun.

She next took a still more solemn step; the Dukes de Crequi, de Montauzier, the Marechal d'Albert and the Marquis of

Geustry, repaired to the Thuilleries on the part of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and were instantly introduced into the royal presence; the King himself conducted them into the council chamber, where he requested the presence of his brother.

The Duke de Montauzier then proceeded to supplicate the King to consent to the marriage of the Princess with M. de Lauzun; to which the King replied in presence of all his ministers, that having permitted the union of Mademoiselle d'Alençon, with M, de Guise, he had no reason to oppose that of M. de Lauzun."

—Monsieur, with much warmth, en-endeavoured to prove that there was a great difference between their quality and rank.

—"I can discover none," said the King, "except you find it in your friendship for foreigners, in which sentiment I

cannot agree with you, I must support the Grandees of my kingdom."

—"Your Majesty supports what she has done," replied Monsieur quickly.

The King, without making a direct reply to his brother, continued with much complacency his eulogium on the French Noblesse, and afterwards took leave of the deputation from the Princess, who immediately repaired to the Luxembourg to report the happy news.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier immediately sent for her notary Boucherat, and gave him orders to draw up an act of donation of all her immense property in favour of M. de Lauzun, in order that he might assume the names, titles, and arms necessary to be mentioned in the marriage ceremony, which was to be celebrated tomorrow.

The notary made her three times repeat the order of a total donation, and con-

cluded by representing to Mademoiselle de Montpensier in the most respectful terms, that she had not left herself the power of disposing of the smallest part of her property even in charity. . . . . . . " Be easy, M. Boucherat," interrupted the Princess smiling, " if I am liberal towards the unfortunate, M. de Lauzun is prodigal. Besides, I can never make a better use of my fortune than by bestowing it on him. Draw up the act according to my orders."

It may readily be conceived that the news of this marriage circulated rapidly in Paris. Never was astonishment greater, never emotion more general. M. de Lauzun, the object of their curiosity and attention, preserved under the present circumstances an unruffled countenance: a calm joy, a noble modesty, in short a dignity without pride diffused itself over his manners, and rendered him generally admired.

During the time that the notary was

preparing the act of donation in a cabinet adjoining to the Princess's chamber, her saloon was filled with an immense crowd.

The contract being signed, the two folding doors of the apartment were thrown open, and the Princess entering, said: "I present to you M. de Montpensier, and I entreat you henceforth to know him only by that name."

The Marechal de Bellfonds was the first to break the solemn and impressive silence which followed these words. He advanced towards the Princess, and placing one knee on the ground, thanked her for the honour she had conferred on the Noblesse of the kingdom. M. de Charast, a Captain of the Life Guards, afterwards exclaimed: "My commission is now without a price; for where is the man sufficiently rich to purchase the honour of being the

comrade of the husband of Mademoiselle?"

This tone of gaiety was imitated by the Duchess of Saint-Aignan, who presented to the Princess a complaint of M. de Montpensier; she related, that having been present at a play a few days before in his company, she had pointed out to him Mademoiselle de Ligny in an opposite box, and made him remark how beautiful she was; observing, that with a fortune of fifteen hundred thousand livres, she would make a good match. I then inquired if she did not appear attractive to him, and offered to smooth every difficulty, and he replied with a hypocritical air, "*who would have me!*" . . . .

"I request to be informed by your Royal Highness, if he is to be permitted to act thus insincerely?" "It was necessary," replied M. de Montpensier, smiling, "in

order to be honourable, to appear humble or extravagant in my pretensions"—and he kissed the hand of the Princess.

On occasions like the present, courtiers display all their art, and endeavour to surpass each other in varying the testimonies of the interest they take in an event so important to those whom it is beneficial for them to please.

Flattery displays itself under a variety of different forms; among some by exaggerated words and actions, while others, more skilled in this art, evince it only by silence and an attitude of admiration, and such delicate homage is often better received than the most flattering words.

Etiquette required that the next morning the new Duke of Montpensier should receive visits of ceremony; but willing to wave this honour, he repaired at an early hour to the Palace of the Luxembourg,

in order to pay his compliments to Mademoiselle de Montpensier; confounded in the crowd, he remained more than a quarter of an hour before being observed by the Princess, who afterwards tenderly reproached him for the excess of his modesty.

The marriage was fixed for the following day. The endless discussions respecting etiquette, had made the Princess renounce her design of having it celebrated in the Queen's chapel in the Louvre, and she had accepted the country-house of the Duke de Crequi, near Charenton, in order to receive the nuptial benediction from the officiating clergyman of Rheims; her intention was to return immediately afterwards to Paris.

The evening of the present day she dedicated to adorn the apartment of M. de Montpensier; she only dreamt of the

most happy event of her life; and foresaw not that which was about to engulph all her hopes.

The solemn consent giving by the King to the marriage of M. de Lauzun, at first intimidated his enemies, who were struck with stupor at such an unexpected event; none of them believed it possible to ward off what fortune seemed to have put beyond their power.

In these moments, without any idea of being able to injure him, several persons occupied themselves, perhaps with the means of gaining his affections. But the interval of eight days imprudently dedicated to useless preparations, awakened the wicked. The active zeal of envy and jealousy set about to form a league; they surrounded the Queen, Monsieur, the Great Condé; these august names inspired them with hopes, and they calmly contemplated the coming vengeance.

The friends of M. de Lauzun watched on their side; repeated advices were given to the Princess to hasten her marriage; Madame Colbert had even the boldness to advise her not to suffer M. de Lauzun to go out alone. Madame de Sevigné, on her knees before her bed, observed that she held out a temptation to the whole kingdom to speak, that it was tempting God and the King who had thus far conducted an affair so extraordinary. An invincible fatality, however, rendered her deaf to the voice of friendship and prudence; all these fore-warnings made not the slightest impression on her mind; it is not during the intoxication of success that the mind listens to melancholy presentiments.

CHAP. VIII.

THE carelessness of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, afforded time to the adroit and cunning Louvois to exert all the means in his power to frustrate their union. He gained over the notary by reasons founded on the interests of the Princess, and requested of him to delay, only for twenty-fours, the execution of the contract, in which case he was certain of hurling destruction on his enemy.

All the royal family, some nobles, those of the ministers who had been gained over to the interests of Louvois, threw them-

selves at the feet of the King, and represented to him the injury which this ill-assorted marriage would bring upon his reputation and his glory, not only in France; but even in foreign countries; that every one would believe that, in order to exalt his favourite, he had not hesitated to sacrifice his near relation. Monsieur, who was animated by personal jealousy, told his brother that, in order to confer honour on M. de Lauzun, he had permitted the ceremony to be performed in the Louvre, and he exclaimed in an emphatic tone, "What! offer such an affront to the memory of Henry IV.!!!"

The snare was well laid and addressed to the feelings of the King. Never was any Prince more the slave of public opinion, never did any one more scrupulously comply with it on all occasions than Louis XIV.; its voice was to him a sacred law; he could not withstand the dread of censure, he

was prevailed on to prohibit the consummation of the marriage, and the momentary triumph of M. de Lauzun was short-lived.

What could the unfortunate Princess do, while the enemies of her lover were already rejoicing at his fall? Shut up in her cabinet, she mused on the dignities to which her love would elevate him; and the happy moment was at hand when he would solemnly swear to her eternal fidelity . . . . . . But a strange noise suddenly interrupted these sweet and alluring thoughts. A messenger arrived with an order from the King for Mademoiselle de Montpensier to repair immediately to the Thuilleries. Surprised, she inquired if the King was engaged in his usual amusements, and learned that he had been closetted for two hours with the Prince of Condé. Her thoughts became confused, but she

only yet experienced that ill-defined and vague idea termed presentiment. On stepping into her carriage, she observed Madame Nogent approaching, whom she entreated to accompany her, and wait in her carriage her return from the chateau. On coming into the presence of the King, the Prince motioned for her to be seated; all his features were indicative of sorrow and embarrassment. The Princess waited with great agitation till be broke silence.

"I am grieved at what I have to communicate to you," said the King at length; "but it is certainly true that I have been reproached with having sacrificed you to my friendship for M. de Lauzun; this accusation must prove injurious to my reputation, and I cannot therefore consent that your marriage be consummated.

The King here paused to wait her reply, but observing that terror and agi-

tation deprived her of the power of speech, he continued:

—"I confess that you have a right to complain of me, and I deserve to suffer all the reproaches with which you may load me."—

—"Ah! Sire, what do you say," exclaimed at last Mademoiselle de Montpensier? "No, I cannot believe you guilty of such cruelty! I am certainly incapable of failing in that respect and submission which I owe to you, and I am still more certain that M. de Lauzun would never disobey your orders, though at the risk of his life; but, Sire, I request of you death, or not to separate me from him. Alas! must he then only be unfortunate because your Majesty loves him! If you are to be subjected to this constraint, the nobles of your kingdom would be much happier than yourself, since they are at liberty to confer favours

on those who are attached to them. You know, Sire, that no personal consideration of yours influenced my resolution; would you wish, from tales invented or presumed, to abandon the man, who is wholly devoted to you? Ah! the same enemies who opposed his elevation have still more interest in taking away his life."

—"Can you entertain any such fear? I will answer for his life."

—"You will answer for it! when after permitting me to espouse him, you have withdrawn your word. You have allowed yourself to be surprised, you can no longer comfort me."

—"Ah! why have you been so slow in an affair of such importance."

—"Alas! Sire, I believed that neither time nor events could have made you retract your word, which has never yet been violated.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier in a state of distraction threw herself on her knees before the King, and melting into tears, intreated him to allow her to die at his feet if he chose to persevere in so fatal a resolution; at this instant the Princess heard a noise in an adjoining chamber. She apprehended she was overheard, and conjecturing by whom, she exclaimed aloud, and with much energy: "for whom do you sacrifice me, Sire? for Monsieur the Prince? I saved his life, and he would sacrifice mine?* Sobs prevented her saying more; the King not being able to succeed in prevailing on her to rise, and greatly agitated himself, threw himself on his knees opposite her, and intermingled his tears with hers.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, seeing the King thus affected, rose up to induce

* The Great Condé. The day on which the engagement took place at the gate of Saint-Antoine.

his Majesty to resume his seat, and said to him in a melancholy tone: "You have pity on my sorrow—it is in your power to remove it, and yet you sacrifice me to vain considerations!"

—"Ah! my cousin, pardon me; Kings are not always masters of their actions; they owe an account of them to the public, which always judges them with rigour; besides, I cannot prevent you from seeing M. de Lauzun; consult him in every thing which concerns you; you cannot grant your confidence to *a more honourable man*—to a man who is more dear to me. It is only the public title appertaining to your husband that I cannot permit him to assume."

These last words afforded a ray of light to her distracted mind; the Princess saw the possibility of a private union, and that in the progress of time, she might be able,

under more auspicious circumstances, to render it public. She found it difficult to conceal from the King the joy which she experienced from this idea, and replied to him, while casting down her eyes: "Well, then, Sire! since your Majesty does not prohibit me from regarding M. de Lauzun as my dearest friend, I am less unfortunate."

On returning to Madame de Nogent, she pressed her hand, and said to her in a stifled voice: "All is lost, or yet rather nothing." She waited with anxiety the explanation of these words; but the Princess falling into a profound reverie, continued silent till they reached the Luxembourg.

On arriving, she understood that *Monsieur de Montpensier* had called; at this name she could scarcely refrain from uttering a cry of sorrow. A billet was de-

livered to her from him. It contained only a few words, informing her of the hour when he wished for a private interview. M. de Lauzun had been vaguely informed of the step taken by the royal family, and wished to communicate this intelligence to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, when he understood that she had been desired to repair to the Thuilleries; his suspicions were then realized, and his spirits suffered a momentary depression. During the morning he had endeavoured meekly to support his new dignities, and already he found it necessary to exercise the still more difficult art of casting them off without humiliation. He however wished to speak to the King, in order to clear up his doubts, and he applauded himself in having done nothing to render a change of behaviour necessary in this terrible reverse of fortune. He approached his majesty

with a grave and sorrowful air, mixed with profound respect. The Prince, though forced to give him pain, endeavoured by a thousand condescensions to soften the intelligence he was about to communicate to him, and employed expressions less equivocal than those he had made use of to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, in order to point out to him how far he might proceed without giving him displeasure:—"You are expected at the Luxembourg," said the King, "my cousin can alone afford you consolation, but observe carefully that here the most honorable love must remain under an impenetrable veil." Saying which, the King left him, and M. de Lauzun, who had not the smallest idea that he would be allowed to enter into a private marriage, partly recovered his hopes.

He entered the house of Mademoiselle

de Montpensier with a passionate and tender air; the Princess, on seeing him, said with a sorrowful smile, "Our enemies have now placed us in such a situation as to enable me to judge whether you love me for myself alone; they have deprived me of the power of loading you with titles and honours, and thus left me nothing but my heart and my fortune to offer you.

"I have been long accustomed to conceal my tenderness for you, it will therefore cost me less than another to veil my happiness from public view; but say, will a secret union constitute yours?" M. de Lauzun hastened to dissipate her doubts on this subject, and even presumed to urge with ardour its completion. "Do not allow," said he, "my enemies time to make new efforts to separate me entirely from you. Let this day, on which I hoped

for the greatest honour, be still that of my felicity; let us change only the place where the ceremony is to be performed; secrecy is enjoined us; it would be imprudent to repair to a place in which the splendid preparations formerly ordered would unquestionaby betray ns. The chapel of your own palace is the most suitable for our purpose. The assistant clergyman has the right of officiating on such occasion; he is devoted to you, and a few of my most intimate friends will only attend me. Give orders that the gates of the Luxembourg be shut during the whole of to-morrow; vouchsafe, no longer to defer my happiness, and repair by this amiable condescension the horrible fear I have had of losing you." The Princess listened to these tender words with transport; his eagerness delighted her, she no longer afflicted herself respecting obstacles which

had only served to redouble the ardour of her lover, and she consented to his wishes.

Madame de Nogent remained at the Luxembourg; a bed was made up for her in a cabinet contiguous to the chamber of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who passed a part of the night in hearing her relate various circumstances connected with the early life of her lover. No sooner did the day dawn, than the Princess arose; Madame de Nogent wishing to adorn the Princess in a manner suitable to the occasion; "No," said she, "since I cannot openly avow my marriage, nothing shall recall to my husband's mind that he espouses a Bourbon, and the plainest dress is therefore the most suitable." She incessantly threw her eyes on the clock, another hour had only to elapse before the performance of the ceremony. At this moment the doors

were thrown open, and M. de Lauzun entered; he wished to precede the witnesses, in order to take every necessary precaution to secure secrecy. The happy moment at length arived; M. de Lauzun, previous to passing into the chapel, placing one knee on the ground, and taking the hand of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, exclaimed: "Thus ought I to receive this hand, and acknowledge what you have done for me."

After her marriage, Mademoiselle de Montpensier wished only to associate with the friends and relations of M. de Lauzun; she avoided as much as was in her power the persons of her own family, who had thwarted her in one of the most important concerns of her life.

It was still however necessary to return to court; she felt a sudden oppression of the mind on entering the chateau, where

she had held her last conversation with his Majesty. All that she had formerly experienced rushed on her imagination; she felt herself humbled and irritated at her past sufferings; but when she perceived M. de Lauzun confounded with the croud of courtiers, her eyes filled with tears, and she was ready to faint. The King, who observed her, had foreseen her emotion, and with the most delicate attention hastened to approach her, saying: "*My cousin is subject to the vapours, but they will quickly pass off.*" At these words he led her to a window. "It is I who am the cause of these tears," said the Prince to her, with an air of kindness, "be assured that I do not blame them; but I have allowed M. de Lauzun to be your friend, and adviser; I know him well, he his incapable of ever forgetting what you would have done for him; I confess however that I expected to have found you more calm."

—"But, Sire, will you persist in these favourable dispositions? I should be sorry to reproach you; if however your Majesty inclines to recall the past, you cannot blame my fears respecting the future."

The King repeated to her every thing suited to tranquillize her and completely succeeded, in calming her by the obliging and flattering things which he said to her respecting M. de Lauzun, for it was only in the affection of his Majesty, that all her hopes rested of obtaining the revocation of a decree which still rendered her happiness incomplete.

M. de Lauzun refused to participate in these sweet illusions; for the first time he testified to the Princess how much he had been hurt by the King's desertion, who treated him in secret with ingratitude; and when a few days afterwards, the Prince announced that he had raised him to the dignity of a Marechal of France, he refused to accept

of it with equal respect and firmness, saying, "*I have not yet merited it.*" He felt all the value of this favour; but he was indignant at the idea that it should be offered him as a kind of compensation, and he explained himself on this subject to Madame de Montespan, in a tone of great chagrin and discontent, having always preserved to himself the right of speaking to her with freedom. The means which she took to console him, induced him to suppose that she alone possessed the power of causing the King to change his resolution. This dawn of hope gave a new turn to his ideas, and restored to him his former equanimity; he ardently requested her to interest herself in his behalf, and to prove to all France that she was capable of struggling effectually against the intrigues of the most powerful individuals of the court. Madame de Montespan in fact enjoyed, at this period, the highest fa-

vour, though she possessed little power in affairs of state, yet her influence was immense in bestowing recompenses and favours; she was conscious of her ascendency over his Majesty; but she was far from being inclined to employ it in favour of a man, whom she no longer remembered having loved, and on whom she sought to avenge herself, on the following account.

The Duchess of Richelieu and the Marechal de Crequi, both anxiously wished to obtain the place of Maid of Honour to the Queen. M. de Lauzun, who was ignorant that Madame de Montespan had already solicited it for the Duchess, greatly interested himself in favour of Madame de Crequi on this occasion. Irritated that her former lover should have any other interest than hers, she bitterly reproached him. He did not however the less on that account cease to promote the views of the

Marechal; but he learned without resentment, that Madame Richelieu had obtained it. He smilingly paid his compliments to Madame de Montespan, alledging as an excuse for his conduct the engagement into which he had entered, to serve Madame de Crequi. He had so much the greater reason to flatter himself, that this affair had left no disagreeable impression on the mind of Madame de Montespan, as her behaviour towards him did not appear to have undergone the least change, since she treated him in the same familiar manner as formerly.

A profound adept at dissimulation, no person knew better than herself how to conceal, under a deceitful appearance, the real sentiments of her mind. She concurred with him as to the steps which it would be propet for him to pursue, in order to dispose the King to allow his elevation;

and she smiled in secret, that it was in her power to prevent his ever attaining it.

For some time M. de Lauzun waited the effect of her promises, but on attentively observing her conduct, he at last began to entertain suspicions; this state of uncertainty, respecting the sincerity or perfidy of her conduct, appeared insupportable, and he hesitated not to employ the most dangerous means to put an end to his doubts.

The King frequently shut himself up with Madame de Montespan in one of the most private cabinets of her apartments. M. de Lauzun gained over to his interest one of her attendants, and prevailed on her to conceal him in a place sufficiently near to overhear every word which passed between the King and his mistress. Thus situated, the smallest motion, even respiration itself might have betrayed him; how dreadful then must have been his fate!

His good fortune preserved him from this danger, but he obtained the fullest conviction of the most hideous perfidy.

Madame de Montespan had retired to dress, with the intention of afterwards repairing to attend the representation of a new ballet. M. de Lauzun waited in the lobby, and presenting to her his hand, inquired if she had yet found an opportunity of speaking to the King in his behalf. She instantly and with inconceivable facility fabricated a story, the falsity of which was perhaps even less revolting than the boldness with which she uttered without either blushing, casting down her eyes, or in short without displaying the smallest sign of embarrassment.

M. de Lauzun at first commanded his feelings; anger rendered him dumb, but the indignation which he conceived at this mean treachery, made him at last forget that he spoke to a female beloved by the King; he regarded only her audacious per-

fidy, and forcibly grasping her hand, he repeated word for word her conversation with the King, and listening only to his indignation he loaded her with abuse unquestionably too well merited, but for which he was soon severely punished.

Madame de Montespan was so distracted, as to be incapable of making any reply; scarcely had she sufficient strength to reach her box, on entering which she fainted.

When any individual incurs the hatred of the favourite mistress of a King, the vigilant eye of a minister is not slow in discovering it. The vindictive Louvois taking advantage of this disposition in Madame de Montespan, readily induced her to enter into a plan of vengeance, against M. de Lauzun, which they hastened to put in execution.

It may easily be supposed that the most atrocious calumnies constituted its basis,

for the consciousness of crimes was to Louvois, what that of virtue is to an honest mind. They began by dexterously calling up former injuries, long since forgotten and generously pardoned; they spoke of the broken sword, of the culpable ambition of wishing to ally himself with the royal family, and of the immense possessions which he had acquired from the house of Bourbon. They represented M. de Lauzun as a man to be dreaded from his boldness; they converted into a crime, the magnificence which he had displayed during his journey to Flanders; they even endeavoured to render suspected the presents made by him to the officers, and the extreme affection of the troops by whom he was adored. They affirmed to the King that M. de Lauzun had kept up a correspondence with the Countess of Soissons lately exiled, and suspected of great crimes: in short, Madame de Montespan

complained of the outrage committed against herself, and this last attempt appeared unpardonable in the eyes of a Prince anxious to render the object of his choice respected*, he gave immediate orders to the Marechal de Rochefort, captain of the Life Guards, to put M. de Lauzun under arrest. Mademoiselle de Montpensier was quickly informed of this measure, accompanied by a threat of perpetual exile if she ventured to take any step to procure his pardon.

Words are insufficient to express the grief of this unfortunate Princess on the present occasion. The overthrow of nature would have appalled her less than the news of this misfortune. She would have joyfully retired from a court henceforth odi-

* It is well known that the King granted guards to Madame de Montespan who had been insulted by the populace.

ous to her if the faint hope of appeasing the King had not with-held her.

M. de Lauzun was confided to the care of d'Artignac, a captain of musketeers, who had orders to conduct him to the Castle of Pignerol, with a prohibition not to suffer him to write or speak to any one. A nephew of d'Artignac, an Officer of the Guards, and Maupertuis, an Ensign, accompanied him in the same carriage, and an escort of a company of musketeers gave a formidable appearance to this unfortunate journey.

M. de Lauzun uttered not a single word, he allowed neither complaints nor murmurs to escape him, but what silence is equal to that of a mind in a state of despair? All the attentions, however, which could tend to alleviate his misfortune were lavished upon him; but there are certain situations which render us insensible to good, as well as bad treatment. Such was

the situation of M. de Lauzun, and it continued during several days. Every morning d'Artignac entreated him to fix himself the hour of their departure, and to name the place where he wished to stop; to these attentions, which excited in his mind a secret impatience, he only returned laconic answers. It was now the end of November, the quantity of snow which had fallen rendered the roads almost impassable, and on the third day they arrived at a part of the road so extremely dangerous, that the postillion informed the travellers of the necessity of alighting and proceeding on foot, but M. de Lauzun said in a blunt tone; "*These misfortunes are not made for me: Proceed.*"

CHAP. IX.

ON arriving at Pignerol, M. de Saint-Mars, Governor of the Castle, came to meet him. On stepping out of the carriage, M. de Lauzun perceived standing at a distance his faithful Charles, one of his valets-de-chambre; on enquiring of d'Artignac, he learned that this man had supplicated him at the moment of their departure, that he would allow him to share the fate of his master, and that he persisted in his intreaties notwithstanding it had been intimated to him that he could not under any pretext obtain his liberty. D'Artignac, affected by this fidelity, had granted his re-

quest, with so much greater satisfaction, as he conceived that it would be some consolation to M. de Lauzun to have a man near him who appeared so much attached to him.

During this explanation, Charles approached M. de Lauzun, who wished at first to dissuade him from continuing in his service, but this worthy and faithful servant replied; " Ah! Monsieur, of what avail can liberty be to me, since you have lost yours?" and falling at his feet, he conjured him, in the most affecting terms, to accept his services. M. de Lauzun, deeply moved, raised him up, embraced him, and tears for the first time since his arrest started in his eyes. His grief being somewhat relieved by these tears, he found himself enabled to thank d'Artignac, and testify to Charles how much he was affected by this proof of his affection. All the spectators sympathised in this scene. A

trait of generosity and of goodness touches all hearts, even those whom the daily habit of beholding misfortunes hardens against compassion.

M. de Saint-Mars, a creature attached to Louvois, had prepared the most obscure and worst aired chamber in the Castle to serve as a prison for the unfortunate Lauzun. He entered this dismal abode with a melancholy oppression at his heart, a lively and painful recollection struck his imagination; it was in a spot nearly similar where, twelve years before, the King bestowed on him such an affecting mark of kindness, which he rewarded by the most zealous attachment, and by the most complete devotedness to this Prince, and which now added to his punishment. Had not those who were able so far to influence the justice and goodness of the King, also the power of causing him to be condemned to consume his days in this execrable

prison? He beheld the tomb open beneath his feet; hope, the last refuge of the unfortunate, forsook him, and be traced in large characters over the door of his prison the well known line inscribed by Dante on the gates of hell.

Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' intrate.*

I shall not attempt to delineate the state of his feelings; who can fathom the abyss of sorrow? who can describe the various emotions which rise in the mind of an illustrious victim suddenly precipitated from the pinnacle of grandeur into this gloomy and hateful abode. It seemed as if he no longer existed but to suffer. In the mean time the heaviness which he experienced, pointed out to him the necessity of taking some repose; he threw himself on a kind

* On passing the threshold, leave hope behind.

of bed, placed in one corner of the chamber, and slept profoundly; but this sleep exhausted his powers instead of restoring them; dreams the most ominous tormented him; the moment of his awaking was dreadful; the sight of his dungeon still farther augmented his irritation, and the delirium of a fever, succeeded by symptoms the most formidable, quickly brought him to the brink of the tomb. He perceived his danger, and owed perhaps his safety to the joy of believing himself near the term of his sufferings. Misfortunes render death desirable, remorse alone makes us fear it.

M. de Lauzun felt consoled by the presence of his friend, if it may be allowed us so to name the valet of an exiled noble, since he alone had not abandoned him. M. de Saint-Mars dispatched a courier to inform Louvois of the dangerous situation of his prisoner, and to request instructions

respecting the indulgences which he might allow him in case of convalescence; but the hard-hearted Minister was deaf to the voice of humanity, and he ordered the Governor to treat him as he usually did the other prisoners in similar situations. The vigorous constitution of M. de Lauzun triumphed, however, over his malady and the rigour of the minister, and at the very time when a rumour of his death prevailed at Paris, he had succeeded, with the assistance of his faithful Charles, in procuring to himself some amusement in his confinement. When in order to avoid lassitude the continual employment of the mind is necessary, solitude is one of the most dreadful conditions to which misfortune can condemn a feeling mind. M. de Lauzun knew that the unfortunate superintendant Fouquet had languished for seven years in the same fortress: both of them wished to see each other, particularly

Fouquet, who, deprived of all society, was anxious to learn what had occurred at court since his imprisonment.

Necessity renders man ingenious; in a short time they were enabled, by means of an opening artfully concealed, to converse with each other for several hours every day. The superintendant, on learning the history of M. de Lauzun, heard with astonishment that this young man, whom he had known at court as the cadet of an illustrious family, but without fortune, had been a Colonel of Dragoons, Captain of the Guards, a Commander, &c. &c. But when he explained to him how he had failed in obtaining the situation of Grand Master of the Artillery, and the scene which passed on this occasion; in short, when he entered into the particulars of his marriage with Mademoiselle de Montpensier, sanctioned by the King; the manner

in which it had been broken off; the immense sums which she had brought him, Fouquet's astonishment became changed into compassion, and led him sincerely to commiserate the baneful effects which confinement had produced on his companion in misfortune. Such were the state of his feelings till the period arrived at which he was permitted to see Madame Fouquet; he then doubtless forgot that any person exhibited a greater instance of the instability of fortune than himself.

In the mean time Mademoiselle de Montpensier was lamenting the long-continued captivity of M. de Lauzun.

From the first year she had infringed the prohibition of not soliciting his pardon, and since she never allowed a day to pass without taking new steps in his favour; they proved a long time fruitless, but happily for M. de Lauzun, cupidity and

avarice eventually accomplished that which humanity and justice had in vain attempted.

When the Duke of Maine, eldest son of Madame de Montespan, had attained his eighteenth year, a project was conceived of giving him an establishment at the expence of Madamoiselle de Montpensier. When this plan was fully resolved on, Madame de Montespan began by artfully insinuating to the Princess, that she was very much disposed to take every possible step to procure the liberty of M. de Lauzun. This offer was received with transport of joy. Naturally frank, Mademoiselle de Montpensier suspected no more. Every day fresh hopes were given her; but suddenly Madame de Montespan affected a sorrowful and embarrassed air, on which the Princess earnestly conjured her to inform her of the cause of this

change. For a long time Madame de Montespan refused to enter into any explanation, and only appeared to yield to her pressing intreaties; acknowledging, that the King would only consent to the liberation of M. de Lauzun on a condition so extraordinary that she dared not mention it; and that it was therefore no longer necessary to think on the subject.

On Mademoiselle de Montpensier redoubling her intreaties, Madame de Montespan, apparently with reluctance, informed her, that on bequeathing at her death to the Duke du Maine the county of Eu, the duchy of Aumales, and the principality of Dombes, liberty would be given to M. de Lauzun.

These cessions were immense in themselves, and rendered still more valuable by the privileges attached to them. The Princess, irritated at seeing that they wished to force her to strip M. de Lauzun

of the possessions which she had made over to him, dissembled her resentment and grief, and haughtily declared, that she would never consent to this proposal. Such firmness greatly disconcerted Madame de Montespan: they next had recourse to the threats of rendering M. de Lauzun's confinement more rigorous; Colbert and Louvois surpassed each other alternately in their importunities; but her resolution still remained unshaken. More gentle means were next employed, and the austere voice of Louvois was succeeded by the winning eloquence of Madame de Maintenon, preceptress to the young Prince. Possessed of the well known talent of insinuating herself into the hearts of every one, and giving the irresistible charm of persuasion to the most severe and wholesome truths, to her belonged the glory of succeeding on the

present occasion. But M. de Lauzun's consent was not less necessary; in order to give it validity, it was requisite that he should be previously set at liberty. Under the pretence of consulting the re-establishment of his health, he was allowed to repair to the waters of Bourbon. Madame de Montespan, who wished not to confide to others such weighty concerns, determined to take upon herself the management of this affair. She travelled to Bourbon with all the pomp of regal splendour, whilst her former lover was escorted thither like a prisoner. On the morning of his arrival, M. de Lauzun requested an interview. He had only twenty-four hours to prepare himself to see a woman, who was the author of all his calamities; but she alone could restore to him liberty and the favour of the King. When he appeared before her, he was obliged to

keep for some time his eyes cast down, from the dread of confounding her by his looks; the gracious reception he received reanimated his spirits, and gave him courage to dissemble in his turn.

—"How great has been my chagrin," said she to him, "at the fatal event which has separated you from me! I only learned it with the rest of the court. At first, when I attempted to speak in your favour, the King was too much irritated for me to urge the subject; by degrees I ventured to recal your attachment to his mind; and I was so sedulous to render my friendship for you public, that no one dared to contradict me in my desire of restoring you to his Majesty's favour."

This was attacking M. de Lauzun on the most tender point; and he replied to her with animation:—

—" Ah! Madam, tell me, what ought I to do to recover the King's favour ?"

—" To love him as you have always done, and especially to believe that the proposition which I am about to make to you, neither originated with him nor me; it was suggested by one of his ministers, who, if you refuse your acquiescense in it, will endeavour to persuade his Majesty that it is only in opposition to his will; but I am convinced, and I have already assured him, that you are actuated by no other motive than that of gratifying him, and that the anxious desire of approaching his person, will readily induce you to subscribe to all his wishes."

Madame de Montespan afterwards informed M. de Lauzun of the sacrifices which it would be necessary to make, and in a few days succeeded, by her deceitful

promises, in obtaining from him a renunciation of his rights.*

He flattered himself that he would be allowed after such great sacrifices to return to court; but Madame de Montespan suggested that the feelings of the King would be injured, were it believed that he had consented to his return, in consequence of the bequest made to his son. It was therefore for him to remain in exile, and remain in it till his recall; Madame de Montespan promised to represent this submission under the most favourable point of view to his Majesty, and at length through her persuasions he departed, though much discontented, for Touraine.

His first care was to write to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, to thank her, and

* Of all the possessions made over to him by the Princess, he only retained the Duchy of Saint-Fargeau, and the beautiful territory of Thiers, in Auvergne.

express his regret at their separation, which he hoped would not be of long duration.'

The arrival of a courtier always inspires much curiosity among the inhabitants of a province. They regard it as an honour to be favoured with his society. The principal inhabitants of the city of Tours, and its environs, seemed to vie with each other in rendering the time of his exile agreeable: but more harassed than flattered by these attentions, he soon found no other pleasure than that of the chace. It seemed as if he could only breathe freely in the midst of forests; it was at least only there that he felt a revival of tranquillity, in a mind which was unceasingly agitated by the recollection of his misfortunes.

Often did he spend whole days in traversing a delightful country on whieh nature had lavished her richest treasures; he paused at the sight of a beautiful spot, or of a meadow sheltered by thickets, and

these inanimate objects alone possessed the power of awakening agreeable sensations in his mind. He was indebted for this enjoyment to the hatred of his enemies, for during his residence at Versailles, he had not acquired a taste for the beauties of nature.

Being one day hunting with some of the neighbouring nobles, by a very common accident he strayed into the forest of Bourgueil-Saint-Germain; night overtook him, and he knew not how to extricate himself from his embarrasment. His horse falling through fatigue, he continued to explore his way on foot; at the end of half an hour, he found himself in a beaten avenue, which indicated the vicinity of a chateau; he was walking very quickly, when, on a bending in the road, he beheld at two paces distant from him a female clothed in white, who appeared terrified at his sudden appearance. Although the

obscurity of the night did not enable him perfectly to distinguish her features, yet her elegant figure and the gracefulness of all her motions, powerfully attracted the attention of M. de Lauzun. After some moments spent in admiration, he gave an account to the fair incognita of the accident which had befallen him, and the difficulty he found to trace his way back to the city. She informed him, with an agitated voice, that he was only about seven leagues distant from Tours, and at the same time she made him an offer of horses and one of her people as a guide. She afterwards pursued in haste the road to the Castle, whilst M. de Lauzun walked by her side. Timid and embarrassed for the first time in his life, he presumed not to put any question. At length becoming almost ashamed of a silence so unusual to him, he made an attempt to break it, but all his phrases were vague and unconnect-

ed; besides no reply was made to him but in monosyllables, and notwithstanding all his efforts, the conversation languished.

There is a kind of magical charm in meetings of this kind, against which few individuals know how to guard themselves, and an air of romance which in a few moments makes it way to the heart. Thus M. de Lauzun sighed deeply on beholding the approach of some domestics, to whom the unknown gave immediate orders to prepare horses, which were brought out in an instant, and in his agitation he left her without inquiring her name. No sooner had she retired than he interrogated the domestic, from whom he learned that she was the Duchess of C * * *, whose husband had been with the army for three months, but whose return was momentarily expected. This man afterwards launched out into a simple and natural eulogium on his young mistress,—" Ah! Monsieur,"

cried he, "no one is comparable to her. You must have remarked yourself that she is beautiful as an angel; but you know not how good, gentle, and charitable she is; there is neither poor, nor unhappy on her domains."

M. de Lauzun listened to this discourse with inexpressible transport. Can there be an eulogium more affecting than that dictated by gratitude and simplicity? On reaching home, he wrote to the Duchess to thank her for her politeness, and to excuse his own inattention in leaving her without making himself known. His letter was short, but written in an elegant style, which, without deviating from respect, yet sufficiently displayed the sentiment of admiration with which she had inspired him. Notwithstanding his ardent desire again to behold her, he avoided requesting permission to this purpose, as the absence of her husband would furnish a sufficient

pretext for refusing his visit, and he was fully determined not to allow two days to elapse before waiting on her, especially as he considered it a duty imposed on him by the civilities he had received at her hand.

He was however prevented by an indefinable fear from visiting her. Full of lassitude and uneasiness, he wished to resume his usual occupations; but that he found impossible. His thoughts constantly wandered back to the Duchess.

CHAP. X.

TOWARDS the evening of the third day, M. de Lauzun set out on horseback attended only by one of his domestics. Without being perfectly conscious of his intention, he pursued the road leading to the forest, and in a few hours discovered the spot where he had a few evenings before beheld the Duchess. Ordering his domestic to wait, he proceeded on foot towards an avenue which he observed before him, and soon arrived near the walls of a

park, in walking round which, a pavilion with lights in it struck his eye. His resolution was soon taken, and without reflection, he scaled the wall; the light which he perceived served like the torch of love to guide his steps; he approached with caution an open window, the blinds of which being let down, favoured his purpose; he crept between a hedge of roses and honeysuckles, and cast an anxious glance towards the interior of the pavilion. His hopes had not deceived him; the first object that met his eye was the Duchess, reclining on a couch in a charming attitude, and apparently plunged in a deep reverie. A thin dress displayed the elegant form of her figure, it was the veil of the graces covering beauty; her fine black hair fell in natural ringlets over her bosom. M. de Lauzun gazed on her with rapture; never before had he beheld any one so lovely,

or attractive; never before had he experienced what he now felt.

In the meanwhile the Duchess arose, and after having taken some turns up and down the chamber with an agitated air, she sat down a few paces from the window, behind which M. de Lauzun was concealed. He started on seeing her so near him; a gentle zephyr wafted towards him the perfume of her hair; his senses became intoxicated; but terror suddenly put a stop to his delight. The Duchess closed her eyes, her head fell upon her breast; tears forced their way through her eyelids, and rolled gently down her cheeks. M. de Lauzun, penetrated with grief and love at this sight, was scarcely master of himself, and he might, perhaps, have betrayed himself, when the Duchess opening her eyes, pronounced some words in a low voice, and he soon distinctly heard her say: "Why have I again beheld him! If not

happy, I was at least resigned. I believed, I had hoped to overcome this unfortunate attachment which has never been shared. Vain hope! a single moment has rendered it more lively . . . . . . Ah! how violent he has rendered it!" After these words, the Duchess remained as if overwhelmed. M. de Lauzun was beside himself. What fatal secret was he about to discover? He wished to fly; an invincible power retained him on the spot . . . . . . The Duchess drew a letter from her bosom, unfolded it with a trembling hand, and without reading it, she fixed her eyes upon the characters with that emotion which is always occasioned by the writing of a beloved object. M. de Lauzun threw a look upon the paper, recognized the billet that he had written to the Duchess, and remained annihilated; his faculties were confounded, a cruel and confused remembrance oppressed him; he wished at this moment to

disbelieve his own eyes, to believe that it was not himself, that it was not her: but the horrible truth struck and almost overwhelmed him, he recognized the Duchess, his knees shook beneath him; he retired a few paces, leaned against a tree, and fell senseless ro the ground.

M. de Lauzun was not deceived, it was that same Alexandrina, formerly sacrificed by him through his passion for Madame de Monaco; ten years of absence had not obliterated from her tender and constant soul, a love conceived in as few hours.

After having for a long time resisted the solicitations of her uncle, she had at length accepted the hand of the Duke of C * * *, from the mere wish of rendering the last moments of her benefactor more tranquil and happy. She prevailed on her husband to retire to the country; the *fêtes* and the splendour of the court did not yeild her that pure and tranquil

happiness, which she experienced in retirement; besides solitude and melancholy soothed her sadness, and augmented her love, and this passion, which would have been perhaps destroyed amidst the tumults and distractions of active life, was exalted by the solemn stillness of the surrounding woods. Long and frequent excursions in the most gloomy and darkest recesses of the forest, became indispensibly necessary to a mind so deeply agitated as hers. We may readily judge what were her sensations at beholding M. de Lauzun! She perceived that he had not recognized her; at their first interview she had scarcely emerged from her infancy; from that period her attractions had improved with her years, her stature had considerably increased, and a man the most susceptible to the influence of female charms, at length discovered in her that model of perfection, which his imagination had hitherto vainly endeavoured to disco-

ver in the females whom he had most loved.

On recovering his senses, M. de Lauzun perceived that all the lights in the pavilion were extinguished; he advanced a few paces uncertain where to seek an outlet, and fortunately discovered a little gate from the park, which had been left unfastened. He retired, but the image of the Duchess was indelibly engraven on his heart.

M. de Lauzun returned home pale and exhausted; his people wished to speak to him, but he commanded them to be silent, and ordering them to retire, threw himself on his bed without undressing. After some hours of disturbed slumber, M. de Lauzun arose, before the dawn, and impatiently waited for the hour when he might present himself before Madame C***; he felt an irresistible desire of again seeing her; and, as love pursues

blindly the impulse which hurries it along, he set out without deliberation. Already he perceived the turrets of the chateau; he discovered the garden, situated on a hill, which bordered on the forest; his heart throbbed with violence, and this emotion increased at every instant.

The Duchess, who had not foreseen this visit, had not given any orders; all the doors were open; he traversed several apartments, in the innermost of which he beheld Alexandrina. She was seated opposite a large painting, representing Louis XIV. at the siege of Lisle, surrounded by his principal officers, among whom was a very striking likeness of M. de Lauzun. The Duke of C***, in a journey which he had made to Paris, had obtained permission to have a copy taken from the original, which was in the possession of Madame de Montespan.

Plunged in a pleasing reverie, the Duchess had not noticed the entrance of M. de Lauzun; on making a motion to rise, she beheld him on his knees a few paces from her; distracted, she fell back on her chair. Love rendered her credulous, and induced her to suppose that her imagination had conjured up the shade of her lover. M. de Lauzun quickly dissipated this illusion; animated by feelings the most ardent, and the most tender, which enthusiasm could inspire, he uttered not a word which did not express his passion; and though his hopes were for ever annihilated, he found, in a heart glowing with love, a language worthy of his transports. This unforeseen declaration produced a delightful emotion in the mind of Alexandrina; surprise and terror were succeeded by an involuntary joy, which occupied her whole soul; under the charm of a sweet

intoxication, she forgot that a passion, in some measure innocent in the morning, because she then believed it not shared, became culpable the moment she knew it to be reciprocal: love is purified by sufferings and tears; always cruel, it is seldom mutual, except when its indulgence would be incompatible with virtue. But what heart is so callous as to condemn, without pity, the first emotion of joy which rises in a heart worn out by love and sorrow.

Alexandrina did not even think of withdrawing her hand, which M. de Lauzun covered with kisses and tears; her fine eyes, beaming with mildness, were fixed upon him, but she had not the power to utter a single word. "Oh! speak, say but one word," exclaimed M. de Lauzun; "deign at least to pronounce my

destiny; reflect that this hand ought to have been mine . . . . . ."

These words opened afresh all the wounds in the heart of the Duchess; and hastily disengaging her hand, she replied to him:—"Ah! yes, I once believed I was destined to constitute your felicity; was it for you to recall it to my mind?"

—"Do not overwhelm me; am I not already sufficiently punished?'

—"No hope can now flatter a too tardy love; I am no longer my own mistress."

—"These melancholy oaths, which the heart disavow, are not valid; it alone can form indissoluble ties."

—"Stop; if you could not formerly love me, learn at least to esteem me; the innocence of my conduct has served till now to expiate an involuntary error; but I should become criminal in my own eyes,

were I any longer to listen to you. I know my duties, and painful as they may be to my heart, I shall fulfil them."

Her voice became feeble, as if she had been exhausted by the effort which she had made in depriving M. de Lauzun of all hope. A noise, which was heard in the anti-chamber, prevented him from making any reply: a domestic entered, and delivered to the Duchess a letter which had been brought by a courier. She grew pale on recognizing the writing of her husband, and waved her hand for the domestic to retire.

After a few minutes silence, Alexandrina said, in a tone to which she endeavoured to impart firmness, "This letter informs me, that M. de C***, whom I did not expect till the end of the month, will be here to-morrow, perhaps this evening. Having been nominated by the King to an im-

portant mission at the Court of Spain, he requests me to prepare to set out with him in a few days." She afterward added, in a low and agitated voice, "far from complaining, I ought to rejoice at an event which will remove me from a danger from which absence can alone secure me. I have, perhaps, said too much; but when I am about to separate myself from you for ever, should I fear to allow you to read my heart; yes, I am sensible it is not wholly dead to happiness, since I carry with me the delightful assurance of being beloved."

The news of this sudden departure so overwhelmed M. de Lauzun, as to suspend all the faculties of his soul; but these last words restored his recollection.

"Oh! how can I support such exquisite felicity, while intermingled with so

much cruelty?" cried he; "to be beloved, and not to enjoy the power of being happy; what a source of never-ending woe!" . . . . .

Alexandrina did not find sufficient resolution to request M. de Lauzun to retire. As the evening was to separate them for ever, she conceived she might innocently indulge in the pleasure which his presence afforded her; she felt that the remembrance of these short moments of happiness would diffuse itself over the remainder of her life. An inexpressible combination of joy and sadness, of felicity and sorrow, penetrated and agitated her mind; it was no longer a being at a distance, one who had refused to unite himself with her, and whom she adored in secret; it was a lover, whose impassioned language recalled to her recollection all that she had formerly suffered on his ac-

count. Young, feeling, and inexperienced, how could she find strength to resist the raptures of an attachment unfortunately too reciprocal ? . . . . We may avoid danger, but the difficulty is in withdrawing ourselves from it after having braved it . . . . . We dare scarcely hope it . . . . . Nevertheless let us comfort ourselves; she found even in the vehemence of the passion that she inspired, a security for the respect and forbearance of her lover. He who truly loves is seldom forward ; if he presumes to form improper wishes, he is withheld by the fear of offending the object of his adoration. Although love alone spoke to the heart of M. de Lauzun ; yet in the enthusiasm of his passion, he would have abhorred himself for corrupting a virtue so pure,—for tarnishing a life so spotless.

At length, the Duchess gave him to understand, that he could no longer, with

propriety, prolong his visit; but M. de Lauzun could not summon sufficient resolution to tear himself away. On reflecting that it was, perhaps, for the last time that he might ever speak to her, that he might ever behold her, he abandoned himself to the most violent despair. The Duchess, dismayed at the vehemence of his sorrow, and being herself overwhelmed at the idea of an eternal separation, could only reply by tears; at the sight of which, tenderness gradually succeeded to the violent emotions which had agitated him; and approaching her, he mildly said, "You suffer, and dare I complain!"

"If it be true that you are sensible to my sorrow, do not increase it by useless regrets; set me an example of courage; retire, leave me: it is a sacrifice we may yet make to duty, in a few moments we must make it from necessity."

"How can I disobey, or rather how can I obey you, when you order me to make such a cruel sacrifice? Well, but before I retire, promise to allow me once again to behold you before your departure; the means are easy; let us agree upon a signal, which will indicate that you are alone at the extremity of the park, on the side where the pavilion is situated. I shall remain every night in the forest to await the propitious moment, too happy, could I pass my whole life in such a rapturous expectation: though I were never again to see you, but merely permitted to flatter myself with the hope, this illusion would still constitute my happiness.

This proposal at once made the Duchess perceive the imprudence of her conduct; she saw the brink of the abyss on which she tottered, and for a moment surveyed its depth. When he presumed to solicit a private interview in a remote

situation during the night, she still possessed sufficient resolution and energy, peremptorily to refuse compliance. M. de Lauzun continued to intreat, but finding all his efforts unsuccessful, be exclaimed:—"Ah well; be ye happy at the expense of my life; for after your refusal, I no longer see any thing which renders it of the least value in my eyes."

The melancholy sadness with which he pronounced these words produced in Alexandrina's mind a sudden terror, and yielding to its influence, she gave her consent, promising every thing which he required of her. But no sooner had he retired than an inconceivable agony oppressed her mind. While she suffered all the torments of an unfortunate attachment, she yet felt those of remorse would have been more terrible. The arrival of her husband augmented her distress; his appearance gave a severe shock to her feel-

ings; she perceived it was necessary to make a heart-rending sacrifice to reconcile herself to the virtue she was about to betray, and far from combating this internal voice so powerful over virtuous hearts, she followed without resistance the law which it imposed upon her of not fulfilling the imprudent promise which love and terror had torn from her. This resolution immediately calmed her agitated spirits, by making her feel that satisfaction which uniformly attends the performance of our duties; but soon reflecting on the grief which M. de Lauzun would exprience on finding his last hope disappointed, she found herself again overwhelmed with sorrow and agitation.

In the mean time all the necessary preparations were making for their departure, which was to take place in three days; on the night preceding their journey the Duchess, availing herself of a favourable

moment, descended alone into the gardens, in order to indulge her sad and melancholy feelings. Anxious once more to behold the spot where she had met M. de Lauzun, she directed her steps toward the borders of the forest. When she had nearly reached a dark and retired spot, she paused, conceiving she heard some one near her; an instant afterwards a letter falling at her feet, she hastened to take it up, and breaking the seal with a trembling hand, read as follows.

"Is it indifference, disdain, or contempt, which has induced you to forget your promise? I was prepared to suffer every misfortune, excepting that of finding you cruel and perjured! Pardon me, I stray; what energy of mind would it not require to endure that which I have suffered? For two nights have I wandered around your dwelling: I listened, called,

and implored you, but in vain, the horrible stillness of night remained unbroken. Command my death, and you shall be obeyed. I submit to every thing, except that of not seeing you this evening. Ah! could you read my heart, you would shudder at the evils which you have occasioned it: if you persist in continuing insensible much longer, I forewarn you that I must assume the resolution which is prompted in similar cases, by the excess of despair."

The perusal of this letter caused the Duchess to fall into the most horrible state of despair. She conceived that M. de Lauzun had formed the design of attempting his own life, and this idea made her shudder. "How unfortunate I am!" cried she sorrowfully. "His indifference constituted the torment of my life, his love distracts my reason, and renders me for-

getful of the most sacred duties. Ah! well, I consent to it, since it is necessary that I immolate myself; may he live, though I should die dishonoured." The idea of being compelled to chuse between the death or happiness of her lover, was a dreadful trial to the gentle and feeling mind of Alexandrina; it depressed her courage, augmented her weakness, and rendered her incapable of resistance.

Chance favoured her design; the Duke being obliged to arrange various papers of importance, excused himself for leaving her alone during the evening, and shut himself up in his cabinet. When the shades of night began to cover the earth, the Duchess entered the park, and proceeded to that side where M. de Lauzun waited for her. He had already leapt over the wall, and on seeing her, flew towards her, but paused on beholding the

agonizing fear which she betrayed. "How can you thus fear me?" said he, in the most gentle tone. "Regard me, I dare scarcely approach you. I cannot speak to you without emotion. What then need be dreaded by her whose virtue I admire, even more than her attractions? Can you suppose that I could for a moment forget the interest, the glory, and the tranquillity of the charming object before me? Ah! if I adore you, my attachment proceeds from no improper motives, but is as pure as she who has given birth to it."

This tender and respectful discourse dissipated the fears of Alexandrina; she felt herself suddenly re-assured, and passed from the height of fear to the excess of confidence. How great was her joy on finding him so worthy of her! This did not escape the penetrating eye of M. de Lauzun; but far from taking advantage of

it, it only served as an additional motive to respect her who confided in his honour with so much security; and notwithstanding the charm of a mutual passion, although he saw her under the influence of a powerful emotion, and remarked her hurried respiration, how much she was agitated, yet he triumphed over his wishes, and found in this generous effort, so worthy of true love, a ineffable pleasure, far surpassing all the enjoyments he had ever experienced.

After the lapse of a hour, the sky became overcast with thick clouds, even a rivulet hard by could no longer be distinguished, save by its murmurs. M. de Lauzun conducted Alexandrina into a grove in the park. There, seated by her side upon the verdant turf, shaded by willows, he abandoned himself without reserve to the delight of speaking of his sentiments,

and of the hope of again beholding her, of that unknown futurity which love seeks to penetrate, and in which centered wishes, which were never gratified. Involuntarily did the Duchess frequently allow answers to escape her which displayed the most tender attachment; while, occasionally, M. de Lauzun pressed with transport the hand which he held in his; and during one of the most delightful nights he ever passed, he neither solicited, nor even desired any greater favour. It was already past midnight, when Alexandrina said in a low and tremulous voice, "we must separate!" Then their tears and sighs were intermingled with each other. At that moment the moon emerged from behind the thick clouds which had enveloped her, and diffused a mild light, which shone on the countenance of Alexandrina, on whose features were depicted the most lively ten-

derness and sorrow. Oh! how lovely did she appear to M. de Lauzun in this situation! How greatly did an expression of feeling heighten her charms! He gazed upon her with rapture: when suddenly they heard voices calling upon the Duchess; at the same instant several domestics were seen approaching with lights; M. de Lauzun had only time to bid her a last adieu, and to retreat behind a tuft of trees, to conceal himself.

He readily divined that her domestics, rendered uneasy by her long absence, had come to seek her in the park where she was in the habit of walking every evening.

CHAP. XI.

IN the midst of the greatest misfortunes, M. de Lauzun had never given way to depression; now however he vainly endeavoured to acquire firmness, but found it no longer. I shall not attempt to delineate the woeful effects of despairing love; I should be fearful of weakening the picture, or of causing my recital to appear improbable; when this passion is tender and sincere, keen and lively, its influence is unbounded. Few men are capable of feeling it, fewer still are worthy of inspiring it; and though it often serves to lead us astray,

it constitutes one of the most exquisite passions of the soul.

While M. de Lauzun was occupied with one idea, from which nothing could distract his attention, and which he would not have exchanged for all the enjoyments of his past life, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who was of opinion that she paid sufficiently by the abandonment of four Duchies for the right of publicly acknowledging M. de Lauzun as her husband, finding herself deceived in her hopes, vented the most bitter reproaches against Madame de Montespan. In order to appease her wrath, they at length granted M. de Lauzun liberty to return to Paris; but it was still necessary to conceal their marriage. How could the King receive, without embarrassment, a man who had given so many striking proofs of attachment; a favourite, who, deprived by him of the most splendid fortune, had been sa-

crificed without pity to the resentment of a woman, and plunged, during several years, into a loathsome dungeon*.

Time, absence, and obstacles, far from diminishing the passion of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, tended on the contrary to preserve it in its full force. She again beheld M. de Lauzun with the same partiality as formerly, and the idea that she alone still retained for him the same sentiments that had originally united them, never for a moment troubled her imagination; un-

* Speaking respecting the tedious imprisonment of M. de Lauzun, Voltaire observes: "In more than one kingdom the monarch does not possess this prerogative, and those even who have usurped such a power, are held in greater respect when they do not exercise it. Ought the citizen who has not offended against the laws of equity, to be punished so rigorously by him who represents the state? Is there not an esssntial difference between displeasing and betraying a sovereign? Ought a King ever to punish a man more severely than is conformable to the laws of the country."

der this error she still enjoyed some moments of happiness; these, however, proved very short and transient, and were followed by tears and unextinguishable sorrow. Not that M. de Lauzun became either unjust or ungrateful; for though completely enslaved by love, this sentiment never induced him to forget what he owed to his benefactress. He lavished upon her attentions and civilities, ought she to have required more? But Princesses are so blinded by the exaggerations of flattery, that they only contemplate a long succession of pleasures and enjoyments. The loss of youth and beauty, so fatal to other females, is scarcely perceived by them. Surrounded by parasites and flatterers, they never thoroughly investigate the truth of that which is so conformable to their wishes. Mademoiselle de Montpensier expected the transports of a lover, when the sweet assurance of being for ever united to him whom she

loved, and of no more being separated from him, ought to have sufficed for her happiness.

Naturally of a proud and impetuous temper, she frequently intermingled reproaches full of haughtiness, with the passionate accents of sorrow. This conduct tended still farther to alienate the affection of M. de Lauzun; a prey to melancholy and grief, while subjected to the torments of an unfortunate passion, and to the chagrin of living in a kind of exile, in the midst of the court, and deprived of his employments and honours, he saw himself the private and unhappy husband of a Princess, who required from him an attachment, which his heart could no longer acknowledge. Thus Mademoiselle de Montpensier quickly remarked a certain impatience, which appeared on various occasions in the behaviour of M. de Lauzun; he greedily laid

hold of the slightest pretext, to shorten his visits; he often also pretended to be under the necessity of absenting himself from Paris, in order to avoid these disagreeable scenes. From that period the Princess continually entertained suspicions and jealousies, although nothing appeared to justify her fears, for M. de Lauzun, separated from the sole object of his affections. sought by amusements wholly foreign to love to drown present recollections.

Monsieur came sometimes to Paris. He gave permission for M. de Lauzun to visit at the Palais-Royal; he even invited him to Saint-Cloud, where he spent a part of the summer. Deep play was very frequent at the house of the Prince; this passion is, so to speak, common to all men, because it flatters their inclinations. M. de Lauzun played with that confidence and assurance which seems to delight, and fix fortune, thus he gained considerable

sums, which gratified not his avarice but his taste for magnificence, and particularly his desire of obliging others, by enabling him to lend them considerable sums.

Never however had M. de Lauzun been equally unhappy. Mademoiselle de Montpensier constantly loaded him with unjust and ill-founded reproaches; at other times his conduct was not wholly blameless towards this unfortunate Princess. He was conscious of it, and regret and sincere remorse, were no slight punishment to a man generous and feeling, but who, delivered up to the enchanting yet agonizing recollections of the past, made vain efforts to tear them from his heart. Distracted, and unhappy, he resolved, in order to call off his attention from a situation that became every day more insupportable, to quit France, and banish himself for a few years. The hope of seeing the King touched at

this voluntary exile, partly perhaps operated on his mind in taking this whimsical resolution; but he took care to conceal it from the Princess, who might otherwise have thrown obstacles in his way, and prevented him from putting it in execution. He wished however previously to obtain the consent of his Sovereign, and not to inform him of this plan till prepared to enter upon it.

With this view, he addressed himself to Madame de Montespan, to procure his Majesty's consent to pass over to England; he had the prudence to add, that the only motive which made him desirous of leaving his country, was the sorrow of living near his Sovereign without daring to approach him. The Prince at first hesitated, he recalled to mind with pleasure the friendship which had subsisted between them, in the most early and brilliant period of his life; but in place of

resigning himself, as he was wont, to the first feelings of his heart, his unfortunate knowledge of man led him to be on his guard against the influence of sensibility, and induced him to grant the reqnest preferred by M. de Lauzun.

This news excited equal sorrow and resentment in the heart of Mademoiselle de Montpensier. What a return for a passion to which she had sacrificed every thing! All the reproaches, which her despair dictated, she threw out against him. M. de Lauzun cast himself at her feet, exclaiming:—"Yes, I confess all my errors; they are dreadful; why cannot I, at the expense of my life, repair them! be assured however that I should never have forgotten what I owe to you, had I preserved my reason." Weary of deceit and dissimulation, he made a frank avowal to the Princess of his passion, only concealing the name of the Duchess. He afterwards ad-

ded: "I perceive that I have offended you too much ever again to appear in your presence. This exile, to which I condemn myself, in order to expiate my crime, will avenge you of a man doubtless greatly culpable, but still more sorrowful in occasioning your griefs, than in being their victim.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier only considered as a new outrage the confidence which he had reposed in her; she did not again stoop to attempt to recall a heart completely estranged from her, and only pursuing the dictates of her pride and reason, she not only agreed to an eternal separation, but insisted upon it, and from that day they never saw each other more. A few years afterwards, when Mademoiselle de Montpensier died, M. de Lauzun assumed a black livery, with silver lace. He had several portraits of the Princess in his possession, and he always spoke of

her with the most tender and sincere respect.

M. de Lauzun received a most distinguished reception at the British court. The King and Queen loaded him with civilities and favours. He was acquainted only with one woman in the world, who could be compared in beauty and attractions to the Queen of England.* The charming expression of her countenance, and the dignity apparent in all her motions, inspired universal love and admiration, and M. de Lauzun beheld with sorrow, the abyss yawning beneath the feet of the beautiful and interesting Maria, and her august consort.

James II. son of the unfortunate Charles Stuart, ascended the throne after his brother's death. Upon his accession he found the kingdom tranquil, under a

* Maria d'Est, second wife of James II.

constitution, which he swore to preserve, but which he very soon violated in many respects, to favour the catholic religion. This Prince possessed many amiable, and even great qualities, but his stubborn obstinacy in persisting to regulate every thing by his own pleasure, and his subserviency to his confessor, a man accused of pride and ambition,* made his friends quickly foresee the fatal result of so much imprudence. Louis IV. forewarned him of his danger at different times, but found him uniformly inflexible to his prayers and tears.

The pomp and solemnity displayed on the entrance of the Pope's Nuncio into London, excited general discontent. The nation immediately took up arms, and the parliament invited William of Nassau,

* Madame de Maintenon herself confesses, that the Jesuits were too precipitate in their measures. Father Chaise, she observes, extolled their zeal, but never their prudence.

Stadtholder of Holland, son of the King's sister, and married to his eldest daughter, an ambitious and severe Prince, to assume the reigns of Government. It was of him that a great writer has said, that he knew neither the pleasures attached to grandeur, nor those of humanity.

This revolution broke out towards the end of 1689. M. de Lauzun forgot his own sorrows, and was only alive to those of his illustrious friends. For a long time the unfortunate James had confided to him his embarrassments and anxieties; of all his misfortunes, that which affected him most was the ingratitude of his daughter Mary, whom of all his children he most loved. In the mean time his danger augmented every instant; when William's army approached, the King had not a hundred men on whom he could rely. The most ominous presages entered into the mind of M. de Lauzun;

he continually pictured to himself the Monarch and his unfortunate Queen a prey to the rage of a fanatical and infuriated multitude, and firmly resolved never to abandon them, he joyfully prepared to lay down his life in so glorious a cause. While he reflected on projects so generous and so worthy of his courage, the King was meditating his flight, and confided his design to M. de Lauzun. "You observe with what dangers I am surrounded," said the Prince; "betrayed by my favourites, and by my ministers, abandoned by my family, I see the Prince of Orange master of my troops, and fleets, and of the hearts of my subjects; in this state, I wish to spare England the commission of a new crime; every thing is ready for my flight, but in order to execute it with the necessary calmness and prudence, the Queen must not accompany me; her dan-

ger would harass my mind, and deprive me of circumspection and prudence. To you, therefore I confide her as well as my son, conduct them to France; protected by Heaven and your valour, I shall not despair respecting the safety of what is most dear to me in this world. M. de Lauzun thanked his Majesty for such a proof of confidence, and swore never to abandon them but with his life. He afterwards hastened to make the necessary preparations, and at the hour of midnight a trusty Valet-de-chambre conducted him through a private entry to the apartment of the Queen, whom he found weeping in the arms of her husband. What a melancholy separation! . . . . . . How sorrowful their farewell! . . . . . . There was not however a moment to lose. M. de Lauzun intreated the Queen to support herself upon his arm, and took the young Prince in the other and happily escaped from the

palace. There was, according to his orders, a gentleman belonging to his suit named Saint-Victor, waiting for him at a little distance from the palace; to whom he delivered the Prince of Wales; afterwards they stept into a carriage, which drove them to the banks of the Thames, where they found a boat, into which they entered and were conveyed to the mouth of the river. M. de Lauzun had hired the day before, under a fictitious name, a yacht, into which the Queen and Saint-Victor entered, while he placed himself close by Patron, firmly resolved to throw him into the sea, if he perceived that he meant to act treacherously; but this man, far from suspecting who were his illustrious passengers, sailed without fear through the Dutch fleet, and happily landed them at Calais, where M. de Charost, Governor of that city, received the Queen with all the respect due to her rank and misfortunes.

This Princess immediately dispatched a courier to Versailles, and she learned on the road that Louis XIV. had set out with his Court to meet her. In effect, the King, followed by a hundred chariots, each drawn by six horses, met the Queen of England ten leagues from Paris. When he perceived the carriage in which was the Prince of Wales, he descended from his own, embraced him tenderly, and hurried forward to meet the Queen who had already alighted. This generous Monarch intermingled his tears with those of the illustrious fugitive; and after handing her into his own chariot, placed her at his right hand, and ordered it to proceed to Saint-Germain, to which he himself conducted her.

—" You may there depend upon being treated with all the respect due to your rank," said Louis to the Queen, with emotion, " and we hope by our attentions to obliterate from your mind the remembrance of your misfortunes.

After the first effusions of gratitude the Queen replied to him in an agitated voice: "The magnanimous soul of your Majesty delights to represent the image of the divinity on earth, for what can be more god-like than to receive and protect, with the most unexampled generosity and goodness, the family of a King proscribed and abandoned by his subjects, his friends, and his relations? Yet I dare not," continued she with timidity, "conduct to your feet the man to whom I owe my life, and the happiness of beholding your Majesty.— All the obligations, Madam, that you have received from M. de Lauzun, I consider in some measure as conferred on myself, and I am eager to testify to him my gratitude; already have I given orders to assure him with how much approbation I view his zeal and devotedness on the present occasion." This new mark of goodness penetrated the heart of the Queen, who, on arriving at Saint-Germain, had

the inexpressible pleasure of presenting her deliverer to the King.

M. de Lauzun fell at his feet, but Louis graciously raised him up, embraced him, and announced to him that he erected this earldom of Lauzun into a duchy, in commemoration of this extraordinary event, and that from this day he must assume this title. Shortly afterwards he was honoured with a public audience, and had apartments assigned him in the palaces of Versailles and Marly.

The day succeeding the Queen's arrival, he learned that the King of England had safely landed in France. After the departure of his consort, this Prince, concealing his order of the garter, effected his escape from London, notwithstanding the measures taken by his enemies for his apprehension. Nothing is more unfounded than the opinion of some writers, who have ventured to affirm, that the Prince o Orange secretly wished to favour the

escape of his father-in-law; since it is notorious, that he employed all the means in his power to render it impracticable. But, be this as it may, it is certain, that none of James's numerous partizans among the Catholics had it in their power to secure the safety of the Queen and her son. The glory of this action seems to have been reserved for M. de Lauzun.

The Duke continued to enjoy the most distinguished favour of the two monarchs; but it was particularly at the court of Saint-Germain that he tasted the sweets of the most true and sincere friendship. Leave was given him to receive, in the church of Notre-Dame at Paris, the order of the Garter from the hands of the King of England, who conferred it upon him with all possible solemnity. It was a singular spectacle to witness a French Duke invested with the order of the garter by the hands of a sovereign in the midst of the French capital, which gave the public

again occasion to say, that the Duke of Lauzun was always destined to be an actor in extraordinary scenes.

The remainder of his life was long, happy, and tranquil. M. de Lauzun was the only noble of the court who had seen the commencement of the reign of Louis XIV.; the respect still preserved for that brilliant period appeared to shed a lustre over him. Men, the most distinguished in the Regent's court, vied with each other in obtaining the approbation of the Duke; and he was considered till his death as a model to the nobles, and the envy of those who, while they sought to imitate him, possessed neither his wit, his taste, nor accomplishments.

FINIS.

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